A

TREATISE

UPON THE

AUTHENTICITY

OF THE

SCRIPTURES,

AND THE

TRUTH

OF THE

CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

SECOND EDITION.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

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AS the profits of this Edition are intended to be given to the Hoſpital for Small Pox and Inoculation, I deſire to make my thankful Acknowledgments to the Vice-chancellor of the Univerſity of Cambridge, and the other Syndics of the Preſs, for their liberal and benevolent aſſiſtance.

J. BRYANT.

BRITISH MUSEUM

TO

THE COUNTESS OF PEMBROKE,

AND MONTGOMERY,

BARONESS HERBERT, &c. &c.

FROM ſome pleaſing conferences, with which you have at times honoured me, I ſhould judge, that the following treatiſe may not prove unacceptable, if it is introduced to your notice. It relates to that great and intereſting object of purſuit, Religion; which you have made the ſubject of your thoughts and inquiries. Upon this account I venture to prefix your very ho-

 nourable

nourable name for a recommendation; and to ſolicit your acceptance of this mark of my ſincere reſpect, and eſteem. In the proſecution of my purpoſe it has been my endeavour to avoid all prolixity from an unneceſſary accumulation of evidence; eſpecially ſuch as is foreign, and too remote. For the mind is fatigued by being overloaded; and too much light tends often to dazzle, and confuſe, rather than illuſtrate. It is not however my intention to abridge myſelf of any material article, that may tend to conviction; but only to reſtrain myſelf from being too diffuſe; and not to engage myſelf in the depths of ſcience and philoſophy for an aggregate of unwieldy * proofs. For I never found, that a multiplicity of inſtances, and illuſtrations, were ſo convincing, as a few well-

* The proofs to which I allude, may be found in Ray, Nieuwentyt, Derham, Grew, Cheyne, Stillingfleet, and others: and are well worth conſulting, though too abundant to be noticed by me.

digeſted

digeſted arguments, fairly ſtated, and ſtrongly enforced. A ſingle dart may be made to ſink deeper, than a cloud of arrows ill directed. An inſtance to this purpoſe I once experienced; the hiſtory of which, with your permiſſion, I will lay before you.

In one of thoſe years, when I was in camp with your truly Noble Father, the Duke of Marlborough; an officer of my acquaintance deſired me, upon my making a ſhort excurſion, to take him with me in my carriage. Our converſation was rather deſultory, as is uſual upon ſuch occaſions: and among other things he aſked me, rather abruptly, what were my notions about religion. I anſwered evaſively, or at leaſt indeterminately, as his inquiry ſeemed to proceed merely from an idle curioſity: and I did not ſee that any happy conſequence could enſue from an explanation. However ſome time afterwards he made me a viſit at my

houſe, and ſtayed with me a few days. During this interval, one evening he put the queſtion to me again; and at the ſame time added, that he ſhould be really obliged, if I would give him my thoughts in general upon the ſubject. Upon this I turned towards him, and after a ſhort pauſe told him, that my opinion lay in a ſmall compaſs: and he ſhould have it in as compendious a manner, as the ſubject would permit. Religion, I ſaid, is either true, or falſe. This is the alternative: there is no medium. If it be the latter,—merely an idle ſyſtem, and *a cunningly-deviſed fable; let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.* The world is before us, let us take all due advantage, and chooſe, what may ſeem beſt. For we have no proſpect of any life to come; much leſs any aſſurances. But if religion be a truth, it is the moſt ſerious truth of any, with which we can poſſibly be engaged: an article of the greateſt importance. It demands our moſt

moſt diligent inquiry to obtain a knowledge of it; and a fixed reſolution to abide by it, when obtained. For religion teaches us, that this life bears no proportion to the life to come. You ſee then, my good friend, that an alternative of the utmoſt conſequence lies before you. Make therefore your election, as you may judge beſt; and Heaven direct you in your determination. He told me that he was much affected with the criſis, to which I brought the object of inquiry: and I truſt, that it was attended with happy conſequences afterwards.

Such, Madam, is our ſituation: and on whichever ſide the truth may lie, the ſubject, as I ſaid above, merits our moſt diligent inquiry. But from whence are we to begin? Undoubtedly from the exiſtence, and attributes of the Supreme Being. For as religion, about which we are to inquire, is a law; there muſt be a lawgiver to give it a ſanction: and that lawgiver muſt be ultimately

mately the Creator, and Conſervator, of all things; otherwiſe it cannot be of divine inſtitution. Upon this foundation the whole fabric reſts. It will therefore be neceſſary to aſcertain this great truth, before we proceed to others, which are deducible from it.

Such then is my purpoſe; which with the moſt true regard and deference is humbly ſubmitted to your candour by,

MADAM,

Your much obliged

And moſt obedient humble Servant,

JACOB BRYANT.

CON-

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I.

Of the DEITY *and his Attributes.*

THE firſt article to be proved is, that there has been ſomething through all eternity: for if there had been originally nothing, there could have been no produce: no derivative either good or evil. Nothing could have been effected, if there were no efficient cauſe: for an effect without a cauſe cannot be conceived. If then there has been ſomething original during the whole proceſs of time, that ſomething muſt have been the ſource of all; the great Creator and Conſervator of the world. As he created all things, he muſt be all-powerful: and as the whole is done with conſummate wiſdom, he muſt be all-knowing, and all-wiſe: and as he has exiſted through a boundleſs duration, he muſt perſevere through the like without

end; for the great ſelf-exiſtent Being, by whom all things are directed, can never be liable to any impediment: nor to any detriment, or decay. He muſt likewiſe be all-good, and all-juſt; for infinite wiſdom is not conſiſtent with depravity: nor can there be any poſſible inducement for his being otherwiſe. He therefore, and he only, is perfect. We may therefore ſafely ſubſcribe to the firſt article of our Church, which tells us, that *there is but one living and true God; everlaſting, without body, parts, or paſſions: of infinite power, wiſdom and goodneſs: the maker and conſervator of all things, both viſible, and inviſible.*

Of the ſuppoſed Eternity of Matter.

If we were to grant, what ſome of the ancients blindly maintained, that matter was eternal; yet the conſequence would be nearly the ſame: for dull, inanimate, matter could not poſſeſs intellect and deſign; it could not modify itſelf, nor perform thoſe mighty operations, by which the world was produced. This made the celebrated philo-

ſopher

ſopher * Athenagoras, who ſaw this difficulty, add intellect, as a concomitant to matter. But inſtead of adding, he ſhould have ſuperinduced it, and made the Eternal Mind the original; and matter with all its variations, poſterior and ſubordinate.

Concerning Chance, and the Atomical Syſtem.

But it may be ſaid, that *chance, and a fortuitous concourſe of atoms might poſſibly have produced the world.* Chance is a term without meaning. Beſides, give chance all the ideal efficacy, that can be conceived, yet who ever found a coin ſelf-formed in a mine of gold, or a buſto or ſtatue in a quarry of granate or marble; or a well-defined diagram upon a newly-dug ſlab of ſlate? Did chance ever produce a ſingle plinth? No. Much leſs a wall of brick; much leſs a ſuit of regular rooms; much leſs a houſe with all its appertenances. But the moſt ſuperb edifice, that ever was con-

* He was of Clazomenæ in Aſia Minor, and the preceptor of Socrates at Athens, where he reſided. He was born near five hundred years before Chriſt.

 ceived

ceived and conſtructed, would not equal the ſmalleſt inſect, bleſt with ſight, feeling, and locomotivity. If then chance could not perform theſe more ordinary operations ſingly, it could never produce the whole world, ſo great, ſo various, and ſo replete with wiſdom; and particularly thoſe beings, with which it is peopled. Many of theſe are gifted, not only with motion and activity, but with ſenſes for perception; alſo with thought, memory, and recollection; and above all, with reaſon to regulate the whole. None of theſe could have proceeded from an unconſcious maſs, nor from that equivocal and ideal parent chance. Beſides, whence came the atoms, upon which chance was to operate? This was firſt to have been ſhewn, but was never conſidered.

Of an infinite Series.

Some have ſurmiſed, that the whole ſeries of Beings, which has been lengthened out in ſucceſſion for ages, may have reached from all eternity: and conſequently was not

not produced, but original, and ſelf-exiſtent. Now we know, that theſe Beings are ſingly, periſhable, changeable, and dependent; how then can they be collectively everlaſting, and without ſupport? If we were told, that ſuch a ſeries of Beings came into the world without any cauſe, or antecedent efficacy, five hundred, or one hundred, years ago; the notion would be eſteemed puerile, and not worthy of conſideration. To extend ſuch a chain upwards to infinity, does not alter the purport. The only difference ſeems to be this: in the firſt inſtance the opinion is abſurd; in the latter infinitely abſurd. For how can dependent Beings ſubſiſt unſupported?

Let us then abide by this plain truth, that where there is deſign, there muſt have been a deſigner; where there is art, there muſt have been an artiſt. The print of a foot in the ſand intimates, that an animal made it; from the impreſſion of a figure upon wax, we judge of the ſeal that impreſſed it. If then the world is replete with marks of conſummate wiſdom, it is certainly the offspring of divine intel-

ligence, and the author muſt have been prior to his work.

Theſe truths afford a ſtrong argument in favour of divine revelation, and of thoſe ſacred volumes, in which they are contained. Theſe volumes were intruſted to the care of a particular people, among whom only the knowledge of the true God was in its original purity preſerved, when the reſt of the world was immerſed in darkneſs. And when another diſpenſation took place, this knowledge was more preciſely defined by the ſacred writers, and more generally diffuſed for the benefit of mankind. From hence we may judge of the divine authority of thoſe writings, in which only this great truth is to be found.

Of the Knowledge of God in the Gentile World.

I am ſenſible, that there are perſons who maintain, that the knowledge both of God and his attributes, was well known to the ancients. This has been ſpoken in a very unlimited manner, without any regard either

to

to time or place. Hence we are led to infer, that this divine knowledge was to be diſcovered at all times, and among all nations. But when we come to inquire, who theſe ancients were, we find them to be only the people of Greece and its colonies, who bore but a ſmall proportion among the kingdoms of the earth. And when we look into the time, we find it to be a few years before the birth of Socrates, which is comparatively late in the era of mankind. Hence, though light at this period might have dawned upon them, yet the greater part of the wide world was under a total eclipſe, without all hopes of day. This was the caſe both at that time, and for ages antecedent, excepting only the family of the ſelected people. Hence, what is urged by theſe writers, does not at all take off from the neceſſity of revelation, and the interpoſition of divine goodneſs for the improvement and ſalvation of man. Beſides, this knowledge did not originate among the Grecians; it was * imported,

* Origen contra Celſum, L. 6. p. 288. edit. Cantab.

and but partially received, and not duly maintained. Thoſe, who like Plato, did adopt it, ſeem to have uſed it merely as a ſpeculative point, ſo that it had little influence upon their lives or morals, no more than a theorem of Euclid or Diophantus. Hence they indulged like others in all the gratifications which the world afforded, followed the baſe worſhip of their country, and engaged at the rites of the moſt vile and obſcene deities. How partially and imperfectly it took place, may be ſeen in a Treatiſe of * Cicero concerning Providence, and the Nature of the Gods. The perſons, who are introduced as ſpeaking upon this ſubject, were well verſed in the learning and philoſophy of their country, and all the accumulated knowledge of Greece; yet though the ſubject was of ſuch importance, and the ſpeakers ſo knowing, Cicero gives us at the cloſe this unſatisfactory account, *that one of them ſeemed nearer to the truth, and the other had more the ſemblance of truth:* but to the truth itſelf they never

* L. 3, C. 39. p. 1246. Gronov.

attained.

attained. The Grecian writers undoubtedly at times diſcloſe ſome excellent doctrines: which taken ſingly and detached, cannot fail of exciting our admiration. But they generally ſhew that they borrowed them, by their not comprehending their true purport; which they ruin by their ſubſequent comment. Thus in an early treatiſe, aſcribed to one of the firſt-rate philoſophers, mention is made of the Creation, and of that Power, by which it was created; and the whole in terms not unworthy of Moſes *. It is an ancient tradition tranſmitted univerſally, that *all things were from God, and conſtituted by him. Nor is there any Being in the world that is ſufficient to maintain itſelf, when deprived of his ſalutary help.* From hence one would judge, that this writer had a juſt notion of the Deity and his attributes, and eſpecially of his infinite power. But he witneſſes the contrary very ſoon. He accordingly tells us, that God reſides in the chief and higheſt part of the world, enjoying the prin-

* Ariſtotle de Mundo, C. 6. § 2 and 3.

cipal

cipal ſeat above all others. And he deſcribes him as a local and limited being: that he acts firſt, and more fully, upon thoſe bodies, that are neareſt to him: and then upon others farther off; his influence and power being inverſely as his diſtance. He proceeds to inform us, that all enjoy this influence more or * leſs: but that the inhabitants of the earth are leaſt affected, as being the fartheſt of all; and this is the cauſe of that debility and uncertainty to which they are liable, and of all the diſorders which prevail among them. From hence we are taught that this influence, which, he ſays, penetrated every where, barely reached the ſurface of the earth; at leaſt it went very little farther. Thoſe, therefore, who lived near the poles, muſt have enjoyed the bleſſing obliquely, and in the ſame proportion as they did the light of the ſun. They muſt have been one half of the year in mental twilight or total darkneſs. But theſe notions of the ancients were baſe and low. How very different are the words of the

* C. 3. at the end.

ſacred

ſacred writers, when they addreſs that infinite Being, by whom they were created and ſuſtained? * *Whither ſhall I go from thy ſpirit, or whither ſhall I flee from thy preſence? If I aſcend into heaven, thou art there: if I go down to Hades, thou art there alſo. If I take the wings of the morning, and remain in the uttermoſt parts of the ſea, even there alſo ſhall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand ſhall hold me. If I ſay, peradventure, the darkneſs ſhall cover* (and conceal) *me, then ſhall my night be turned unto day.* † *But will God indeed dwell upon earth?* ſays the royal preacher. *Behold the heaven, and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; much leſs the houſe that I have made.*—Again —‡ *The heaven is my throne, ſaith the Lord, and the earth my footſtool: where is the houſe that ye build unto me; or what is the place of my reſt? Hath not my hand made all theſe things?* The ſublimity of theſe paſſages, and the truths which they contain, manifeſtly ſhew the ſuperiority of the Scrip-

* Pſalm cxxxix. 7, 8, &c.

† 1 Kings viii. 27.

‡ Acts vii. 49.—Iſaiah lxvi. 1. &c.

tures

tures over the writings of the Gentile world. And from the ignorance of the philoſophers, and the darkneſs in which the world was involved, we learn the neceſſity of revelation.

Concerning the Light of Nature.

There are, however, ſome, who deny this neceſſity. They inſiſt, that without any revelation, the *light* of nature will plainly diſcover to us a firſt cauſe: and the *law* of nature will enforce its worſhip, and all other moral duties. But, as I have before ſaid, I cannot conceive that any law can be binding, which has not a lawgiver to give it his ſanction. I cannot help doubting of its exiſtence. And as to the *light* of nature, which is ſuppoſed to afford ſuch univerſal information, how came it to fail in the many inſtances, which I have produced? If ſo many perſons of learning, who ſought diligently for the truth, miſt of it, how can we imagine that it would be found among people, who did not ſearch after it, among the Celts and Scythæ, among the Aſiatic tribes

of

of wandering Arabs, or the wild hords of Getulians, and Garamantians in the deſerts of Africa? The philoſopher Cicero however is perſuaded, that *there was never any nation ſo very rude and barbarous, which had not ſome notion of the Gods* *. *And though people might not* † *know which God out of many to adopt, yet all were perſuaded, that ſome God was to be worſhipped.* And this opinion he thinks is innate: and the ſame is ſaid by ‡ Seneca. The authority of theſe philoſophers has often been applied to, in order to ſhew, that there is in the minds of all men an original imprinted idea of the Deity, and that it has univerſally prevailed at all times, and in all places. But the whole has been grievouſly miſapplied; for what theſe learned men allude to, and would enforce, is the worſhip of their national gods, and the gods of other countries; all which tended to the excluſion of the true God; of whom they make no mention, and of whom they had no true

* Cicero, Tuſc. Q. L. 1. § 13. p. 1145. Gronov. ed.

† Cicero de Leg. L. 1. § 8. p. 1288.

‡ Senecæ Epiſt. 117. p. 577. vol. 2. Var.

idea.

idea. The whole, that is ſaid above, relates to ſuperſtition and idolatry, and to a plurality of Deities. The words therefore of theſe philoſophers have been by no means underſtood: for they militate againſt the very purpoſe for which they were introduced. The true God was not to be found amid that herd of monſters: nor did the honours paid to them relate to his worſhip. It is ſaid, *that they did not know which to adopt*. In truth, there was not one worth *adopting*. It is therefore idle to conclude, that among theſe baſe divinities the only true God was included. The Apoſtle St. * Paul bears witneſs to this truth, when he tells the Galatians, that there was a time when they *knew not God*; and he adds, at that time *ye did ſervice to them, which by nature are no Gods*.

The Notion baſe, and of a bad Tendency.

Such opinions may be in ſome degree pardonable in the writers above mentioned,

* Galat. iv. 8.—The Apoſtle mentions in another place, that the world with all its wiſdom *knew not God*. 1 Cor. i. 21.

and

and in other philoſophers, who held the ſame tenets. They were excellent men in their day, who laboured after the truth; and made great advances, though they could never attain to the bleſſing, and who thought, that any worſhip was better than none. But the ſame allowance will not perhaps be made to Mr. Pope: who goes beyond the Heathen in his ſentiments: and who thinks that all rites, however baſe, and all idolatry, however groſs and ſhocking, related ultimately to the worſhip of the one true God. This is to be ſeen in the firſt ſtanza of his celebrated paraphraſe of the Lord's Prayer:

> Father of all, in ev'ry age,
> In ev'ry clime ador'd,
> By Saint, by Savage, and by Sage,
> Jehovah, Jove, and Lord.

It muſt hurt a truly pious mind, to ſee the Creator of all things, the everlaſting God, Jehovah, brought upon a level with Jupiter, and Baal, (who is the ſame, as *Lord)* and (as we find intimated) with all the foul and horrid deities of the Pagan world. Who would imagine that the God of all

purity and holineſs could be repreſented not only by Jupiter, Bacchus, and Vulcan, but by Pan and Priapus, by Baal Peor, and Moloch, and by all the monſters of Egypt, and of the moſt ſavage nations: that their rites were his rites; and their mad orgies performed to his honour? Yet theſe notions Mr. Pope recommends. Thus has this excellent Poet ſacrificed truth to rythm, antitheſis, and an affected alliteration. But God forbid, that we ſhould ſuppoſe, that there was the leaſt connexion between theſe widely different objects: for as the Apoſtle ſays—* *What communion hath light with darkneſs? what concord hath Chriſt with Belial?* The rites of theſe ſuppoſed divinities were obſcene and horrid beyond imagination; and ſo far were the baſe objects of this worſhip from having any relation to the ſupreme Deity, that they are ſaid repeatedly to be devils, and no gods: and the whole of the divine inſtitution under Moſes was to preſerve one portion of mankind from this general

* 2 Corinth. vi. 15.

defection,

defection, that God's name might not be totally loſt by the introduction of theſe demons. They are always mentioned in Scripture with deteſtation; and their worſhip as abominable: and their votaries are upbraided for their folly, as well as wickedneſs. * *They ſacrificed to devils, and not to God:*—† *And they ſerved idols, which were a ſnare unto them. Yea, they ſacrificed their ſons and their daughters unto devils. And ſhed innocent blood, even the blood of their ſons, and their daughters, whom they ſacrificed to the idols of Canaan.* ‡ *They have forſaken me (ſaith the Lord) and have burnt incenſe unto other gods. They have built alſo the high places of Baal, to burn their ſons with fire for burnt-offerings unto Baal.* § *They made a grove, and worſhipped all the hoſt of heaven, and ſerved Baal. And they cauſed their ſons and their daughters to paſs through the fire, and uſed divination and enchantments.* ‖ *Every abomination to the Lord, which he hateth, have they,*

* Deut. xxxii. 17. † Pſalm cvi. 36, 37, 38. ‡ Jeremiah xix. 4, 5. § 2 Kings xvii. 16, 17. ‖ Deut. xii. 31.

the Canaanites, *done to*, or in honour of, *their gods. Even their ſons and their daughters have they burnt in the fire to their gods.*——The Iſraelites are upbraided for ſuffering themſelves to be ſeduced from the true God to the worſhip of theſe ideal divinities. * *Hath a nation changed their gods? which are yet no gods: but my people have changed their glory, for that which doth not profit:* that is, for a deity of no efficacy or power. *Be ye aſtoniſhed, O ye heavens, at this.*—Again—† *Thy children have forſaken me, and ſworn by them, which are no gods.* And St. Paul tells the ‡ Galatians—*When ye knew not God, ye did ſervice unto them, who by nature are no gods.*

Of People in a State of Nature.

When therefore ſome of the philoſophers inſiſted, that no nation was ſo barbarous, as not to have ſome § religion; we

* Jerem. ii. 11, 12. † Jerem. v. 7. ‡ Gal. iv. 8.

§ Some of thoſe, who allowed a God, denied his Providence. Nihil curare Deum, nec ſui, nec alieni. *The Deity never troubles himſelf about any buſineſs of his own, nor of any body elſe.* Cicero. de Leg. L. 1. p. 1287. § 7. b.

muſt

muſt not from thence conclude, that the name of the true God was there known, or his worſhip carried on. There was no relation between the Lord of Light, and theſe infernal demons; who were worſhipped out of fear, and became the dread of their votaries. The nations of the earth in general had their mental powers very much obſcured; eſpecially thoſe, who were remote, and had no opportunities of cultivation. So far from entertaining any innate idea of the Supreme Being, there is reaſon to think, that they could not, without a miracle, have conceived any juſt notion of him. For we may judge of thoſe times of darkneſs by the darkneſs which ſtill prevails. There are many nations upon earth, of whom we are credibly informed, that, from their debility of mind, they are incapable of being inſtructed in any eſſential religious doctrine. How can thoſe come to the knowledge of the true God, who have not words in their language to expreſs any of his attributes, by which only he can be made known? Such

for the moſt part are the Samoids, Oſtiacs, and Tonguſes, and the other inhabitants near the great Siberian Sea. South America conſiſts of an immenſe tract of country, the mediterranean part of which is filled with a variety of ſavage nations. An honeſt miſſionary, Labat, confeſſed, that it was impoſſible to convert them; for they wanted words to expreſs, and ideas to conceive, thoſe eſſential truths, upon which religion is founded. He accordingly told * Tamburini, the General of the Jeſuits, that his miſſionaries had effected nothing in reſpect to religion. He aſſerted the ſame before Clement the Eleventh, at that time pope: and inſiſted, that before the Americans could be converted, they muſt be made men: for they were to the laſt degree ſavage, and incapable of conceiving inſtruction. They conſequently could have no idea of God; for they had no terms to expreſs his attributes. To this Mr. de la Condamine bears witneſs, who had been

* See the General Hiſtory of the Church, by Dr. Moſheim, Vol. II. p. 306. Note o; and Labat. tom. viii. p. 7.

converſant

converſant with many nations of Indians in South America; and particularly upon that vaſt tract of country, which is watered by the river Maranon. * Toutes les langues, dit-il, dont j'ai eu connoiſſance dans cette partie du monde, ſont fort pauvres.—Toutes manquent de termes pour exprimer les idées abſtraites et univerſelles. —Tems, durée, eſpace, être, ſubſtance, matiere, corps, tous ces mots, et beaucoup d'autres, n'ont point d'equivalent dans leurs langues. Non ſeulement les noms des Etres métaphyſiques, mais ceux des Etres moraux ne peuvent ſe rendre chez eux q'imparfaitement. † He tells us, that this incapacity proceeds from their paucity of ideas, which extend not beyond the neceſſities of life: that they are incapable of foreſight and reflection; and that the Indians of the Miſſions, and the wild Indians, are equally limited in their conceptions; not to ſay equally ſtupid. From hence, ſays the au-

* See Hiſtoire General des Voiages, Vol. XIII. p. 572.

† See the Voyage of Monſ. de la Condamine, Tranſlation, p. 26, 27. See alſo p. 106.

thor, one cannot obſerve without being mortified, how little a man, left wholly to the guidance of mere nature, differs from the brutes. He ſpeaks of them in general as being without any idea of religion.

The Moravians, who have eſtabliſhed two Miſſions, the one in Greenland, and the other in Labrador, are ſenſible of the like incapacity among the natives. Thoſe of the former department, though they have long laboured to make converts of the people, yet confeſs, that they cannot bring them to be rational Deiſts. *They have experienced* (ſays * Crantz) *how little is effected by firſt endeavouring to make them rational creatures; and then* † *proving the exiſtence and*

* Hiſt. of Greenland, and of the Miſſion, &c. Vol. II. p. 424.

† Inſtead therefore of theſe attributes of the Deity, and theſe duties, the Moravians ſubſtitute the blood and wounds of Chriſt; particularly the waſhing in his blood, and the baſking, like worms, in his wounds. Theſe articles occur continually in the letters and diſcourſes of the Greenlanders, publiſhed by Crantz. *Thou gaveſt food to my ſoul, when thou concerning the Saviour's blood, death and wounds didſt inſtruct me. No other thing can rejoice me, but the Redeemer's death,*

and the attributes of God: and from thence enforcing the conſequent duties. He ſays, that they tried for years, and nothing was effected. * Niecamp gives a like account of the Tamuli, and other tribes upon the coaſt of Malabar. *A miſſionary*, he ſays, *ſhould conſider, before he thinks of introducing, what may be thought the principal object of information: and ought to know, how little he can influence his pagan diſciples by any moral arguments concerning the attributes of the Deity; and the various duties, in which virtue conſiſts.* The idea therefore of God and his perfections muſt be very partially

death, his paſſion, his blood and wounds. p. 447. *On our Saviour's ſufferings, death and wounds I think daily, and hourly.* p. 450. *John Ludwig to his laſt moments was continually pointing at the wounds of our Saviour in his hands and his feet.* p. 452. *Our Saviour has ſet me free by his wounds and bloody ſweat.* p. 454. *I hide myſelf daily in our Saviour's open ſide.—I ſuck his blood, like a ſuckling child.* p. 456. *Juſt as the little birds hide in the rock cliffs, in the ſame manner do I go in, and out in the wounds of our Saviour: and I lay my heart, beneath the bleeding ſide of Jeſus, to drink there.* p. 463. *And now I kiſs thee out of the innermoſt part of Jeſus' wounds.* p. 455. *Ye wounds, ye are all venerable to me, but I addreſs myſelf more to one of them:—it is my favourite bit.* Hymn of Count Zinzendorph. See Rimius, note, p. 43.

* B. I. L. Niecamp. Hiſt. Miſſionis in India Orientali, Halæ, 1747, p. 100.

maintained in ſome of theſe nations; and in others it muſt be totally unknown. Had nature implanted in them any firſt principles, there could have been no difficulty in reviving that latent intelligence, with which they had been previouſly gifted.

If then there were any innate idea of the Deity; any moral ſenſe, and original truths, impreſſed upon the minds of men, we ſhould, I * think, find them genuine, and unſophiſticated, among theſe remote and undiſciplined tribes. But of this we meet with no inſtance. Have then theſe ideas been effaced? Certainly not: for they could not loſe, what they never poſſeſſed; and what they are incapable, even with inſtruction, of obtaining. We are told, that no improvements can poſſibly be made, till they become humanized; and then by a gradual civilization prepared for theſe truths.

If then this be the ſtate of the world in ſome parts at this day; and if this darkneſs was of old ſtill more prevalent, and attended with the moſt horrid and flagi-

* I ſpeak with diffidence; becauſe there are perſons of much learning and good ſenſe of a contrary opinion.

tious

tious practices, it ſhews, what I have repeatedly urged, the neceſſity of revelation for the everlaſting benefit of mankind: and the bleſſing of God to make it take effect.

It may be aſked, why that influence, and thoſe helps, which obtained of old under the Apoſtles, do not ſtill in the ſame degree prevail; and why the labours of the miſſionaries are for the moſt part ſo ineffectual? I anſwer, that two reaſons may be given. In the firſt place, the church of God has been for many ages eſtabliſhed; and does not want that miraculous interpoſition, of which at firſt it ſtood in need. In the next place we muſt conſider, that the Chriſtian religion is a ſyſtem of reaſon; and the miſſionaries above ſeem to have nothing rational in their proceſs. The Jeſuits of Paraguay introduced a ſpecious kind of idolatry, under the ſanction of the name of Jeſus: which could afford no real edification. The others ſay little of God, and his attributes; or of that mental purity, and reaſonable ſervice required. In the room of theſe they have ſubſtituted

a repe-

a repetition of the ſame words, attended with the ſame carnal ideas; from which no ſpiritual information can poſſibly be derived. They all ſhew, and moſt of them confeſs, that the eſſentials of Chriſtianity are wanting; and that they do not *attempt* to make their converts *rational creatures.* How then can we expect the Divine influence to interfere towards the promoting of a defective and irrational worſhip?

II. CON-

II.

CONCERNING THE CANON OF SCRIPTURE, AND THE AUTHORITIES IN ITS FAVOUR.

NO hiſtories whatever, that have been tranſmitted from ancient times, are ſupported with that variety of proofs, with which the ſacred writings are attended. Joſephus a learned Jew, who was born about five years after the death of our Saviour, has given us a liſt of the Books of the Old Teſtament; as they ſtood in his time; and as they had been tranſmitted for ages. He has likewiſe afforded us the hiſtory itſelf, which he wrote in the Greek language. And though it is modified, and adapted to the taſte of the Grecians, yet it contains moſt of the principal events, as deſcribed in the original. But of all the verſions, however numerous, that of the Septuagint is of the greateſt conſequence.

It

It is a tranſlation of the Old Teſtament in the Greek language; which was performed in the time of Ptolemy Philadelphus, king of Egypt, about three hundred years before the birth of Chriſt. One proof of its antiquity may be ſeen in its being quoted by the Apoſtles. As we find here all the prophecies of the Old Teſtament, particularly thoſe which related both to our Saviour, and to the Jews, and which were afterwards manifeſtly compleated; it ſhews, that theſe prophecies could not be the invention of man. They muſt originally have proceeded from Divine inſpiration; for they were antecedent to the event. The Books of Moſes are of great conſequence: and theſe have been additionally preſerved by the Samaritans, who received them near ſeven hundred years before the birth of Chriſt. As they hated the Jews, and were deteſted by them, they never could co-operate towards any material alteration. Their mutual jealouſies prevented any colluſion. In conſequence of this we find a general conformity between their copies, and thoſe of the Jews. The

Samaritans

Samaritans remain at this day; and by ſome are ſuppoſed to have the original copy, which they received, when they firſt ſettled in Samaria. There are alſo Gentile writers, who give evidence to ſome of the principal hiſtories, ſuch as the antediluvian ſtate of man, and the deluge, and to many ſubſequent events. But above all others the Jews themſelves afford the ſtrongeſt proof to the preſent purpoſe. For they remain a ſtanding miracle, being, as was foretold, ſcattered over the face of the earth; and every where retaining thoſe ſacred records, in which their future rejection was denounced. Nothing but a judicial infatuation can prevent their ſeeing, what ſo nearly concerns their happineſs. But this cloud muſt remain, till they have fulfilled the high purpoſes of the Deity. That the whole is myſterious and of divine appointment we may learn from St. Paul's addreſs to the Jews of his time at Rome. *For I would not, brethren, that you ſhould be ignorant of this myſtery (leſt you ſhould be wiſe in your own conceits) that blindneſs in part hath happened to Iſrael:*

until

until the fulneſs of the Gentiles be come in. Romans xi. 25. In conſequence of this blindneſs the Jews, who are the greateſt enemies to Chriſtianity, have preſerved the ſtrongeſt proofs in favour of the Goſpel. They ſhew to a demonſtration, that the Chriſtians have not altered the books of Moſes and of the Prophets.

The prophecies thus preſerved are various; many of which relate to kingdoms and nations, long ſince ruined, and annihilated, according to the doom denounced upon them. Thoſe upon Tyre were accompliſhed in a moſt wonderful manner: and thoſe upon Babylon ſtill more wonderfully compleated. But there are two, with which I ſhall chiefly concern myſelf at preſent; as they are cloſely connected with the miſſion of our Saviour, and the events which were to enſue upon his coming. Of theſe the one foretold the rejection of the Jews, to which I above alluded: and the other the calling of the Gentiles, and their admiſſion to the church of Chriſt. The purport of theſe prophecies is plain and obvious to the laſt degree:

but

but through every age overlooked, or miſtaken, by the Jews. They never could be perſuaded, that theſe prophecies related to themſelves.

Of the Meſſiah promiſed, and the Rejection of the Jewiſh Nation.

The firſt of theſe two prophecies was given to the children of Iſrael in the wilderneſs by Moſes; at the time, when he was declaring the other ordinances of God. *The Lord thy God will raiſe up unto thee a Prophet, from the midſt of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me: unto him ye ſhall hearken.* Deut. xviii. 15. Now the great characteriſtic of Moſes was that of a lawgiver, ſent by God with a miraculous power to make known his ſtatutes to Iſrael. He was to conduct them from a ſtate of bondage to a promiſed land, a land of peace and liberty; which upon their good behaviour they were to enjoy. But no one of the race of Iſrael ever attained to this character, or was to be compared to Moſes, except Chriſt, the Meſſiah Prince. He was like him, but far

his

his ſuperior. The likeneſs conſiſted in his being a lawgiver, who declared a new law from heaven, which he certified by a miraculous proceſs. He likewiſe was the great conductor of God's people through a wilderneſs in a ſtate of pilgrimage; and diſplayed to their view a better habitation, which they were to enjoy for ever. He therefore, and he only, was the perſon, who at any time could be ſaid to be like to Moſes. The Jews themſelves confeſs, that no one antecedent to Chriſt could claim the character of Meſſiah; and we are certain, that nobody ſince had any pretenſions to it. We may therefore be aſſured, that he was the prophet pointed out of old, to whom they were commanded to hearken. In conſequence of this, our bleſſed Saviour, when the Jews had endeavoured to kill him for raiſing a man to life upon the ſabbath-day, accuſes them of their hardneſs of heart; and bids them, as they would not believe his works, apply to the prophecies concerning him. *Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they, which teſtify of me.——Do not think, that*

that I will accuſe you to the Father. There is one that accuſeth you, even Moſes, in whom ye truſt. For had ye believed Moſes, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. John v. 39, and 45, 46. Then comes the following part of the prophecy, which, if we duly attend to it, will be found of great conſequence. Moſes had ſaid, *The Lord ſhall raiſe thee up a prophet of thy brethren*—and he proceeds to tell them, that he ſhould be introduced as they had requeſted.—*According to all that thou deſiredſt of the Lord thy God in Horeb, in the day of the aſſembly, ſaying, Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, neither let me ſee the great fire any more.* At the aſſembly here mentioned, when the law was given at Horeb, it is ſaid, *that Mount Sinai was altogether in a ſmoke, becauſe the Lord deſcended upon it in fire: and the ſmoke of it aſcended like the ſmoke of a furnace: and the whole mount quaked greatly. And there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount.* Exodus xix. 16, 18. *And all the people ſaw the thunderings and the lightnings, and the noiſe of the trumpet,. and the mountain*

ſmoking: and when the people ſaw it, they removed, and ſtood afar off. And they ſaid unto Moſes, ſpeak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God ſpeak with us, leſt we die. Chap. xx. 18, 19.——And the Lord ſaid, *They have well ſpoken.* Accordingly they were to have upon the coming of the ſecond lawgiver, the prophet, whom God was to raiſe up to them like unto Moſes, all that they deſired in Horeb. He therefore came without thoſe terrors, with which the law was given, and with a milder and more gentle diſplay of miracles: which however were more ſignificant, and ſuperior in their operation to the former. Moſes then repeats the promiſe of God, which he had before mentioned, and comes to the concluſion, which is of great importance. *I will raiſe them up a prophet from among their brethren like unto thee; and will put my words in his mouth: and he ſhall ſpeak to them, all that I ſhall command him. And it ſhall come to paſs, that whoſoever will not hearken to my words, which he ſhall ſpeak in my name, I will require it of him:* or as the Greek has it—*I will avenge*

avenge myſelf upon him. Deut. xviii. 18, 19.

It is well known, that the land of Judea was conquered by the Babylonians, the city Jeruſalem burnt, and ruined, and the people, for their idolatry, led into captivity. After a term of ſeventy years they were wonderfully brought back; and their city and polity reſtored. As they had ſmarted ſo ſeverely for their apoſtacy, they never more returned to the worſhip of idols. On the contrary they adhered ſtrictly to the law of Moſes; and additionally to this they obſerved numberleſs rites, and cuſtoms according to the traditions of their elders: ſuch was their zeal, and ſenſe of ceremonial duty. But at the ſame time they offended greatly by their neglect of morality, and true religion. For this our Saviour with proper ſeverity continually upbraids them. But ſtill there were other nations as bad. This therefore was not the principal reaſon for the ſeverity, which they experienced, when thoſe evils came upon them. Our Saviour foretold, and deſcribed what was to happen—as—*great tribulation, ſuch*

as was not from the beginning of the world to this time: no, nor ever ſhall be. Matt. xxiv. 21. The chief cauſe of theſe uncommon calamities, which Joſephus ſo amply verifies, was their rejecting the Meſſiah, the Lord of life; *the prophet*, whom God *raiſed up to them, like unto Moſes*, and *in whoſe mouth* he *put his words.* Who came to them, as they had requeſted, not in the terrors of Horeb, but in a milder courſe of miracles, yet of greater efficacy; by which his miſſion was manifeſtly declared. Theſe were attended with inſtances of the greateſt goodneſs, and compaſſion; of grace and truth; and the moſt conſummate virtue, without the leaſt allay. But they deſpiſed his virtues; and ſhewed an inveteracy to his perſon, and an obdurate hatred of his miniſtry. His miracles were not performed out of oſtentation, and as a mere diſplay of power. On the contrary they were always neceſſary, and pertinent; and proceeded from the greateſt benevolence, and good-will towards thoſe, for whoſe ſake he laboured. But the malignant Jews, contrary to conviction, aſcribed them all to the powers of darkneſs; to *Beelzebub*

zebub the prince of the devils. And after a long courſe of perſecution, and ingratitude, they at laſt accompliſhed their infernal deſigns, and crucified the Lord of life. In conſequence of this all thoſe accumulated evils came upon them; ſuch as no nation, either before, or after, ſuffered. Our bleſſed Saviour, as we have ſhewn, foreſaw them, and foretold their approach. And though he had experienced ſuch baſeneſs and ingratitude, and was further to ſubmit to their cruelty; yet he overlooked his own ſufferings, and with unparalleled compaſſion wept over their city, which was ſo ſoon to be brought to ruin. *Verily*, ſays our Saviour—*all theſe things ſhall come upon the preſent generation. O, Jeruſalem, Jeruſalem, thou that killeſt the prophets, and ſtoneſt them, which are ſent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as an hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not. Behold your houſe is left unto you deſolate: for I ſay unto you, ye ſhall not henceforth* (after I am once departed) *ſee me more, till ye ſhall ſay—Bleſſed is he, that cometh in the name of the Lord.* Matt. xxiii. 36, 7, 8, 9.

St. Luke mentions the ſame, or a ſimilar, circumſtance, when our Saviour's ſoft feelings and tender compaſſion for this unfortunate people were ſhewn; and when he more plainly intimated the manner of their ruin by the Romans. *And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it: ſaying, if thou hadſt known, even thou in this thy day, the things, that belong to thy peace—but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the day ſhall come upon thee, that thine enemies ſhall caſt a trench about thee, and compaſs thee round; and keep thee in on every ſide: and ſhall lay thee even with the ground; and thy children within thee: and ſhall not leave in thee one ſtone upon another, becauſe thou knoweſt not the time of thy viſitation:* nor did they know the Prophet, who viſited them. Luke xix. 41, &c.—Theſe judgments came very ſoon upon this devoted people, who filled up their meaſure of iniquity by crucifying the Meſſiah Prince, the Prophet raiſed up by God like to Moſes. Jeruſalem was ſoon after ſurrounded with armies, the people periſhed by thouſands through peſtilence, and famine: and after a ſeries of calamities,

ſuch as no nation ever experienced before, they were totally ſubdued, and their kingdom ruined. The numbers that periſhed during the ſiege, and from the inſurrections, which enſued, are by Joſephus, and other writers, eſtimated at far more than * a million of ſouls. But the manner of their deaths, as related, was worſe than death itſelf.

Of the Diſperſion of the Jewiſh Nation.

But this is not all. They were, according to the prophecy of Moſes, to be *ſcattered among all nations*; and they were *to become an aſtoniſhment, a proverb, and a by-word among all nations, whither the Lord ſhould lead them.* Deut. iv. 27. xxviii. 37. To their obedience all things were promiſed; but upon their neglect and rebellion, the ſevereſt puniſhment was denounced. *But it ſhall come to paſs, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to obſerve to do all his commandments, and his ſtatutes, &c.*—

* See the Chronology of Archb. Uſher, p. 652. According to him the numbers were 1,337,490.

the Lord ſhall cauſe thee to be ſmitten before thine enemies: thou ſhalt go out one way againſt them, and flee ſeven ways before them, and ſhalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth.—The Lord ſhall ſmite thee with madneſs, and blindneſs, and aſtoniſhment of heart. Deut. xxviii. 15—25—28. Theſe threats took place in ſome degree, when the ten tribes were carried into captivity by Salmanezer, who placed them in the cities of Aſſyria, and of the Medes: and alſo, when Judea was not long after ſubdued by the Babylonians, and the people tranſplanted to Chaldea, and other countries. But above all, they were compleated, when Jeruſalem was taken by the Romans under Titus Veſpaſian; at which time the people experienced an univerſal removal, and became ſcattered into very diſtant countries; and are to be found at this day in a ſtate of exile, amid a variety of nations; few in number comparatively in reſpect to thoſe nations; but ſufficient, if collected, to form a mighty empire. Of this laſt captivity our Saviour gave warning, and counſelled his diſciples to flee from the evils which were at hand.—*When ye ſhall ſee Jeruſalem compaſſed with armies, then know, that*

that the deſolation thereof is nigh. Then let them, which are in Judea, flee to the mountains;—for theſe be the days of vengeance; that all things which be written, may be fulfilled.—And they ſhall fall by the edge of the ſword, and ſhall be led away captive into all nations; and Jeruſalem ſhall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. Luke xxi. 20, &c.—At what time this final prediction will be compleated, can only be known by the all-wiſe God. In the mean time this widely ſeparated people remain a continued miracle; and have ſo remained for ages. They are a laſting monument of prophetic veracity; and, wherever their fortune has driven them, they have been *an aſtoniſhment, a proverb, and a by-word among nations.*

Such is the hiſtory of the Jews, and their diſperſion, to which we have nothing ſimilar in the annals of time. They are admitted, and fixed, but never incorporated with any nation under heaven. They are every where diſtinct and unconverted; and, conſequently enemies to the goſpel. Rivers run downwards through many outlets to the ſea;

ſea: and are ſoon blended and loſt in the ocean. But the Jews are like the waters of Styx, which remain unmixed, wherever they flow, and retain their bitterneſs to the laſt.

Concerning the calling of the Gentiles.

When it pleaſed God to chooſe the poſterity of Abraham to be the conſervators of his divine oracles, and to found his church among them, it was his deſign that they ſhould be a ſeparate people. He accordingly placed them in a land originally deſtined for them, and which was particularly adapted to this purpoſe. And he gave them laws, by which they were prohibited from having any people incorporated with them, who would not ſubmit to their rites and religion. This was done, that the name and knowledge of the one true God might be preſerved in this ſelected nation; when it was loſt or obſcured in the reſt of the world. They were in conſequence of this ſtiled in the ſcriptures *a ſpecial, a peculiar*, and *a choſen people, and the ſons of God.* But

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in time they carried this caution and this prerogative to a degree of extravagance. They looked upon themſelves, as ſanctified, and ſuperior to all other people. This produced an unwarrantable diſguſt, and even abhorrence, towards other nations, with whom they never willingly would aſſociate. Hence it was, that the woman of Samaria ſaid to our Saviour, *How is it, that thou being a Jew, aſkeſt drink of me, who am a woman of Samaria?* and the Evangeliſt gives the reaſon—*for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.* John iv. 9. Nor did they countenance any intercourſe with other more diſtant people. Hence St. Peter ſays to Cornelius the centurion, and thoſe who were with him: *Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing* (that is—according to the national prejudices) *for a man, that is a Jew, to keep company with, or come unto, one of another nation. But God hath ſhewn me that I ſhould not call any man common or unclean.* Acts x. 28. The Samaritans were ſo abhorred by the Jews, that when the latter thought to vent the moſt opprobrious language to our Saviour, they ſaid—*Thou art*

art a Samaritan, and haſt a devil. John viii. 48.

The Prejudices of the Jews in reſpect to this Article.

In conſequence of this prepoſſeſſion, nothing but a cogent, and ſupernatural influence, could have forced the prophets of old to diſcloſe a truth, ſo contrary to their opinion, that the Gentiles (people of all nations under heaven) ſhould in proceſs of time be called, and become the people of God: that Chriſt, of whom they propheſied, ſhould invite them, and that they ſhould be admitted to his glorious diſpenſation. There were three things, which were impoſſible to have been carried into execution, without the manifeſt interpoſition of the Deity. Firſt, that the prophets ſhould, contrary to their inveterate prejudices, declare this truth: Secondly, that the apoſtles, under the like rooted prejudices, ſhould admit the truth, and co-operate towards the converſion, and admiſſion of the heathen nations. And laſtly, that thoſe nations, under equal

prejudices,

prejudices, devoted to the religion of their fathers, and averſe, as far as they were known, to the Jews, ſhould accede to the truth, recommended by people, whom they held in no eſtimation. After all theſe comes another difficulty, without a miracle inſuperable: which conſiſts in the means requiſite to carry on this great work. For theſe nations were widely ſeparated: and as they were of different rites and manners, ſo they were of different languages. How then was it poſſible for a few illiterate men of Galilee, and their adherents, to win over to the goſpel ſuch variety of people, whom they could neither underſtand, nor be underſtood by them? Yet they did effect it: and nothing but the divine aſſiſtance could have brought it to perfection.

The firſt Difficulty.

In the proceſs, which we are to purſue, we will firſt conſider the moſt early predictions of the prophets concerning the calling of the Gentiles. And at the ſame time let it be remembered, what, I hope, has been moſt

moſt ſatisfactorily proved, that theſe predictions were certainly antecedent to the event. Iſaiah, in his prophecies concerning the future Meſſiah, continually mentions his admiſſion of the Gentiles to his dominion. *And there ſhall come forth a rod* (or ſceptre) *out of the ſtem of Jeſſe: and a branch ſhall grow out of his roots. And in that day there ſhall be a root of Jeſſe, which ſhall ſtand for an enſign of the people: to it ſhall the Gentiles ſeek.* Iſaiah xi. 1, 2, and 10——*Behold my ſervant, whom I uphold: mine elect, in whom my ſoul delighteth. I have put my ſpirit upon him, he ſhall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.* Iſaiah xlii. 1.——*I have called thee in righteouſneſs—for a light unto the Gentiles.* Iſaiah xlii. 6.——*And the Gentiles ſhall ſee thy righteouſneſs: and all the kings thy glory.* Iſaiah lxii. 2.——*And the Gentiles ſhall come to thy light, and kings to the brightneſs of thy riſing.* Iſaiah lx. 3.—To the ſame purpoſe ſpeaks the prophet Jeremiah.—*The Gentiles ſhall come unto thee from the ends of the earth, and ſhall ſay, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things, in which there is no profit.* Jeremiah

miah xvi. 19——The words of the prophet Malachi to this purpoſe are very particular. *I have no pleaſure in you* (ye houſe of Iſrael) *ſaith the Lord of hoſts: neither will I accept an offering at your hand. For from the riſing of the ſun, even unto the going down of the ſame, my name ſhall be great among the Gentiles—my name ſhall be great among the heathen.* Malachi i. 10 and 11.——The Pſalmiſt introduces the Meſſiah, as mentioning the promiſe of God, that the Gentiles ſhould be admitted to his kingdom.—*The Lord hath ſaid—Aſk of me, and I ſhall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance: and the fartheſt parts of the earth for thy poſſeſſion.* Pſalm ii. 8.—Here we ſee the rejection of the Jews ſtrongly intimated; and the admiſſion of the Gentile nations declared. Thus we find theſe holy men foretelling an event, quite contrary to the popular opinion, when there appeared not the leaſt probability of its being fulfilled. No human forecaſt could have conceived it.

The ſame intimation was given long afterwards, when the prophet Simeon took in his arms the infant Jeſus, and pronounced

ced him *to be a light to lighten the Gentiles*, as well as *the glory of Iſrael.* Luke ii. 32. But above all our Saviour himſelf, who aſſumed with his uſual humility the title and character of a ſhepherd, tells his diſciples, that he ſhould ſuperintend, not merely them, and thoſe of their nation, but another flock, which demanded his care. *Other ſheep I have, which are not of this fold: them alſo muſt I bring, and they ſhall hear my voice: and there ſhall be one fold, and one ſhepherd.* John x. 16.

The ſecond Difficulty.

We now come to a ſecond obſtacle, which nothing but the interpoſition of the Deity could remove. This aroſe from the wrong notions, which the apoſtles and diſciples of Chriſt had entertained of his kingdom, and their national abhorrence of other people. They had the teſtimony of the prophets to enlighten their minds, and they had heard the words of their maſter; who told them, that he ſhould have *another fold.* But their prejudices were ſtrong, and hereditary:

ditary: and however expreſs the declaration, they could not conceive it to be true. Nothing but the divine influence could wean them of their prepoſſeſſion. At laſt it pleaſed God to admoniſh Peter in a viſion; and to inform him, that the bar was now to be taken away: and that he was to call nothing of itſelf unclean, and impure, which God had created: and, conſequently, he was not to ſhew any abhorrence to people of other nations. Upon this the apoſtle made a viſit under the direction of the Holy Spirit to Cornelius, a Roman centurion. And finding that this perſon had been favoured with a divine communication, Peter ſeemed to awake as out of a long ſleep, and ſaid—*Of a truth I perceive that God is no reſpecter of perſons: but in every nation, he that feareth God, and worketh righteouſneſs, is accepted with him.* In conſequence of this he baptized Cornelius, and his family, who had previouſly received the gift of the Holy Ghoſt: and he afterwards inſtructed the other apoſtles and diſciples with the will and determination of God. But ſtill they adhered to the rites of the Moſaic law,

which were not compatible with Chriſtianity. For they conſiſted for the moſt part of emblems and alluſions, which related to Chriſt and his mediatorial office: and the type became idle and uſeleſs, when the thing ſignified was arrived. Upon this it pleaſed God to raiſe Paul of Tarſus, a very extraordinary man, who, through a falſe zeal, had been a grievous perſecutor of the Chriſtians. But, by a miraculous converſion, he became a ſtrong pillar of the church; and the principal apoſtle of the Gentiles. He inſiſted upon the inutility of the former law: which was inconſiſtent with the goſpel of Chriſt, which was ſtiled the law of the New Teſtament. Saint Peter, at laſt, co-operated with him: and they confirmed the other diſciples. Upon this they all began to betake themſelves into various regions of the earth; teaching, and baptizing: and thouſands and ten thouſands were made proſelytes to the goſpel. The prejudices and difficulties, which I have here mentioned, could not have been removed by human means. We perceive the power of God through the whole operation.

The third Difficulty.

We ſee now the apoſtles freed from that falſe bias, by which they and their fathers before them had been carried aſide: and going over the world with vaſt labour, and preaching the goſpel of Chriſt. Their ſucceſs was wonderful, but from whence did it proceed? They had, it is true, got over their own prejudices: but had not the nations, whom they were to convert, the like, or greater? What was Chriſt crucified to the people of Pontus and Aſia: to thoſe of Colchis and Iberia: to the Celt and Scythian? Who freed their minds from their national eſtabliſhed worſhip; and diſpoſed their hard hearts to the reception of the goſpel? Even He, who ſoftened *the flinty rock*, and *made rivers to run in dry places:* who gave *manna in the deſert:* and fed his people *with the bread of heaven.* To Him, and Him only, can the great change be attributed: for human power, unaſſiſted, could never have prevailed. The apoſtles left to themſelves would not have gained a ſingle Samaritan: of this we may judge from the few proſelytes made at this day.

The laſt Difficulty.

The laſt words of our Saviour to his diſciples after his reſurrection contained an order for them to make his goſpel manifeſt to the whole world. *Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt.* Matt. xxviii. 19. And in another place he tells them, *that repentance, and remiſſion of ſins ſhould be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jeruſalem: and ye are witneſſes of theſe things.* Luke xxiv. 47. The difficulty, which occurs here, I have in ſome degree anticipated: and it is otherwiſe very obvious. For how could theſe men of Galilee gain a ſufficient knowledge in ſuch a variety of languages, as was ſufficient for this work? A ſuperficial inſight could by no means be adequate to the purpoſe. There muſt have been in the teachers an aptneſs, copiouſneſs, and fluency, to preach with any effect; and to captivate the hearts of the hearers. But how was this poſſible to be obtained in ſo many

many different and numerous tongues, between many of which there could be no ſimilitude nor analogy? With man it was not poſſible, however neceſſary. Therefore it pleaſed God to afford the diſciples a miraculous gift of tongues, without which they could never have propagated the goſpel. This was effected in a wonderful manner by an effuſion of the Holy Ghoſt at the feaſt of Pentecoſt; when there were aſſembled at Jeruſalem devout men from all parts of the world. Every one of theſe heard their own language to their great aſtoniſhment ſpoken by the apoſtles and diſciples. *Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Meſopotamia, and in Lydia* *, *and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Aſia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene; and ſtrangers of Rome, Jews and Proſelytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them ſpeak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.* Acts ii. 9, &c. Theſe languages are numerous, yet they were not ſufficient to carry on the

* So I read, inſtead of Judea.

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great work in the regions, to which it was extended *. For, as I have before obſerved, we have authority to believe, that ſome of the diſciples lived to ſee the knowledge of the goſpel carried beyond the limits of the Roman empire. The apoſtles therefore were certainly gifted with tongues, wherever they came. The hiſtory proves the miracle. *We are aſſured*, ſays the learned Moſheim, *by the moſt unexceptionable teſtimonies, that Chriſt was worſhipped, as God, almoſt throughout the whole Eaſt; as alſo among the Germans, Spaniards, Celts, Britons, and many other nations. But which of them received the goſpel in the firſt century, and which in the ſecond, is a queſtion not to be anſwered at this diſtance of time* †. That the name of Chriſt was known, and his religion thus far propagated, may be in great meaſure proved from the churches founded in Antioch, and in Aſſyria; in Samaria, Alexandria, Carthage, and as far as Vienne

* Such as Colchis, Iberia, many parts of Africa, Iberia Hiſpanica, Luſitania, Gaul, and, if we may truſt to Venerable Bede, as far as Britain.

† Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory, Vol. i. p. 72.

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and Lyons in Gaul. In the intermediate ſpace, ſuch as Italy, Greece, and, what is now called, Aſia Minor, they were very numerous even in the time of St. Paul. The writers too were in great number: ſuch as Juſtin of Syria Paleſtina; Irenæus of Lyons; Polycarp of Smyrna; Athenagoras of Athens; Theophilus of Antioch; Tertullian of Africa; and Tatian of Aſſyria; with ſeveral others in the ſecond century, who ſhew how far the goſpel had reached by the countries, from whence they wrote. Pliny was born in the time of the apoſtles; and in the reign of Trajan had the province of Bithynia: and he ſpeaks of the Chriſtians being there ſo numerous; that in ſome places the meat could not be ſold in the ſhambles, becauſe it had been offered to idols. The Chriſtians would not buy it; and there were not others ſufficient to purchaſe.

The Proſpects afforded to the firſt Proſelytes.

Let us conſider what encouragement was offered to the firſt converts, when they

were to embrace Chriſtianity. After a total renunciation of the Gods of their fathers, and many worldly gratifications, to which they had been accuſtomed, they were invited to take up the croſs of Chriſt; and to undergo pains, and penalties; ſhame, exile, and death itſelf for the ſake of the goſpel. They however were won over by the beauty of holineſs, and the ſanctity and reaſonableneſs of the word of God: and in conſequence of it underwent the moſt grievous perſecutions, as the Gentile writers witneſs: and as we alſo are more fully informed by thoſe of the church. Hence Athenagoras, in his excellent apology to the Emperors Marcus Antoninus and Commodus, mentions how duly juſtice was adminiſtered to all other people: but if a Chriſtian was accuſed, there was no trial: no appeal. The name of Chriſtian was often ſufficient: and the word was—*to the beaſts—to the lions.* Thus the poor victim, without any proceſs, was hurried away to the ſavage monſters to be devoured. Ten, or more, grievous perſecutions did the Chriſtians ſuffer: and yet the word of God prevailed.

vailed. It may, I know, be ſaid, that every ſect, and ſchiſm, encreaſes by perſecution. But it is an egregious miſtake. Undue oppreſſion, and ſeverity, may ſometimes inflame peoples minds; and controul beget oppoſition. But when perſecution extends to acts of univerſal cruelty and maſſacre, human nature cannot ſtand it. Chriſtianity was introduced into Japan: and the converts are by ſome writers ſaid to have amounted to many myriads. The laſt remains, after they had ſeen the far greater part without mercy cut off, took ſhelter in the city Samabrava. But the Japaneſe, aſſiſted with cannon by the Dutch, took the place, and put them all to the ſword. Aſk now, what is become of Chriſtianity in Japan? It is totally extinct. And by what means? By perſecution. Caſt an eye upon Spain, where the Proteſtant religion, like a ſalutary plant, began once to ſhew itſelf. How was it ſuppreſſed? By fire and faggot, adminiſtered by that horrid tribunal, called the Holy Office. By command of this unmerciful court three moſt excellent men, Cazala, Conſtantino, Ægidio,

dio, were burnt alive: and thoſe, whoever they might be, that favoured their opinion, were too much terrified to proceed in their path. What then ruined the Reformation in Spain? Perſecution. A tree may be pruned, and lopped, and ſprout out more luxuriantly. But when ruined to the root, it will never, without a miracle, produce either fruit or flower.

Of the Progreſs of the Goſpel in oppoſition to all Difficulties.

Such were the difficulties which Chriſtianity encountered at the time of its firſt propagation. They were different, as I have ſhewn: and under none of them could religion have been ſupported by any human power. Yet we have ſeen from the moſt unexceptionable authorities, and cleareſt evidence, that even in the apoſtolic age it had been planted in regions widely ſeparated; and, as there is reaſon to think, beyond the limits of the Roman empire. In theſe regions the apoſtles preached the goſpel to people, who varied in manners, worſhip,

ſhip, and language: and they ſucceeded. The evidence for this quick and extenſive propagation of the Goſpel is ſo ſtrong, that, unleſs we ſet aſide all hiſtory, it muſt be admitted: and we know, that it could not have been effected, without the interpoſition of the Deity, and the gift of tongues. I therefore repeat, what I have before ſaid, that the hiſtory proves the truth of the miracle: and we may be aſſured that the religion of the goſpel is of divine original.

III. OF

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OF OUR SAVIOUR, AND THE PROPHECIES RELATING TO HIS COMING.

Concerning the Series of Prophecies, which related to Chriſt, the Meſſiah.

AS the prophecies above mentioned were too remote and extraordinary for any human foreſight to have conceived: ſo thoſe concerning our Saviour will be found equally remarkable, and contrary to all human apprehenſion: which however were wonderfully compleated. They are very numerous, and all tend manifeſtly to that great object, to which they are juſtly ſuppoſed to have been directed. And as they were given at different times, I will mention ſome of thoſe, which are moſt pertinent,

nent, and remarkable, in the order in which they occur. And here it is to be obſerved that the more remote the era, the more dark and myſterious the prophecy will at firſt appear. But new light will accrue continually: and all theſe oracular intimations will receive reciprocal illuſtration; till they are at laſt confirmed by the event. Nor let the infidel here ſurmiſe; that the nearer people approached to this event, the more room was afforded for conjecture: for the lateſt of theſe prophecies was ſome centuries antecedent to the completion. Nor could any perſon, who lived but five years before the birth of Chriſt, have formed the leaſt notion of thoſe great occurrences, which enſued upon his coming into life.

Of the moſt early Prophetic Declaration.

The firſt prophecy, which alludes to Chriſt, and the bleſſings to accrue from him, is almoſt as early, as the creation of man. God, who by the excellence of his knowledge foreſaw the fall of Adam, and

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the evil, which would neceſſarily enſue, appointed a remedy for that evil, and an atonement to be effected in good ſeaſon, *by the Lamb ſlain from the foundation of the world.* At the ſame time therefore, that the Deity denounces death upon Adam for his offence, he affords him gracious intimation of his future pardon, and that all, that was loſt by him, would be repaired by a deliverer to come. In conſequence of this the death, which was denounced upon him, would not be eternal, but be followed with a renewal of life; which was to be effected by that perſon, who was to *bruiſe the head of the ſerpent:* and render all his purpoſes abortive. The Deity accordingly ſays to the Deceiver—*I will put enmity between thee and the woman: it* (the ſeed of the woman) *ſhall bruiſe thy head, and thou ſhalt bruiſe his heel.* Geneſis iii. 15. We find, that the perſon to come is not mentioned as to be born of the ſons of men; but his birth is confined to the woman, and called her ſeed: and whenever he appeared, he was to cruſh the ſerpent's head, that is ruin him intirely. On the other hand,

hand, the malice of the ſerpent is repreſented allegorically, as only bruiſing, or hurting, the heel: by which is ſignified an inſidious, and ineffectual attack upon the unwary paſſenger, during his pilgrimage upon earth. This victory over the grand deceiver is mentioned by the prophet Iſaiah, when he ſpeaks of the coming of Chriſt.—*In that day the Lord with his ſore and great and ſtrong ſword, ſhall puniſh Leviathan, the piercing ſerpent: even Leviathan, that crooked ſerpent.* Iſaiah xxvii. 1. This victory is deſcribed in the Apocalypſe, where it is ſaid, that *an angel came down from heaven, and laid hold on the dragon, that old ſerpent, which is the devil and ſatan.—And the devil, that deceived them was caſt into a lake of fire and brimſtone.* Revelations xx. 1, 2, and 10.

Notwithſtanding theſe happy circumſtances which were to accrue from the ſeed of the woman, yet it pleaſed God to paſs judgment upon Adam for his offence.—*In the ſweat of thy face ſhalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground: for out of it waſt thou taken. For duſt thou art: and*

unto duſt ſhalt thou return. Geneſis iii. 19. This was a ſolemn and fearful denunciation, yet attended with gleams of comfort: as there was intimation in the foregoing part, that the machinations of the great enemy would be abortive; and conſequently that this death would not be for ever: Adam underſtood it in this ſenſe, as did his poſterity: who ſpeak of this life as a ſtate of pilgrimage; during which they were proceeding to a better habitation. Adam accordingly, though he had juſt received this ſentence, gave a name to his wife, which indicated his future expectations.—*And Adam called his wife's name Eve* (or life) *becauſe ſhe was the mother* (not of all living, but) *of all life.* Geneſis iii. 20. This appellation was emphatically given, becauſe from a virgin daughter of Eve the *Lord of life* was to be born, the ſame, who ſaid of himſelf—*I am the reſurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet ſhall he live.* And to ſhew his miraculous power, and to give full evidence of the truth, which he advanced, he raiſed Lazarus from the grave. John xi. 44.—

44.—*In him was life, and the life was the light of men.* John i. 4.—*For ſince by man came death, by man came alſo the reſurrection of the dead.—For as in Adam all die, even ſo in Chriſt ſhall all be made alive.* 1 Cor. xv. 21, 22.

From the hiſtory given of the firſt man Adam, however myſterious it may in ſome parts appear, we learn for certain, that there was an act of diſobedience, and a puniſhment in conſequence of it. But that puniſhment was alleviated, and a promiſe given, that all that had been forfeited by one man, ſhould be retrieved by another, ſtiled in aftertimes *the Lord of life*. This perſon was to be of the ſeed of the woman, and was to cruſh the head of the ſerpent, and to reſtore life and immortality to the world. In conſequence of this the woman was called Eva, or *life:* becauſe through her this bleſſing was to be ultimately derived. Our Saviour accordingly in the fulneſs of time came into the world, and was born of a virgin: and in him was fulfilled, all that had been intimated in this ancient prophecy.

The Prophecy which came by Abraham.

The next promiſe made to man is, that, which was given to the Patriarch Abraham, when, in obedience to God's command, he had made an offer of his only ſon for a ſacrifice. This promiſe is more determinate than the former; for by that we were informed in general, that a Saviour would come into the world. But we are now told the particular family; and that he was to be from a deſcendant of Abraham. The angel of the Lord accordingly called to him out of heaven, *and ſaid: By my ſelf have I ſworn, ſaith the Lord; for becauſe thou haſt done this thing, and haſt not withheld thy ſon, thine only ſon: that in bleſſing I will bleſs thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy ſeed, as the ſtars of heaven; and as the ſand which is upon the ſea ſhore:— and in thy ſeed ſhall all the nations of the earth be bleſſed: becauſe thou haſt obeyed my voice.* Gen. xxii. 16, 17, 18. From hence we farther learn, that not only the poſterity of the Patriarch was to enjoy the benefit,

which

which was one day to accrue: but all nations were to participate in the bleſſing. This affords intelligence of great conſequence.

The Prophecy by the Patriarch Jacob.

The next prophetic promiſe is given by the Patriarch Jacob, to his twelve ſons, juſt before his death. In his addreſs to Judah, he mentions how reſpectable his tribe would prove; and how ſuperior to thoſe of his brethren: which we know was fully verified. He then proceeds to diſcloſe ſome future events of great importance, which are compriſed within a ſmall compaſs.—*The ſcepter ſhall not depart from Judah: nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come: and unto him ſhall be the gathering of the people*, or nations. Gen. xlix. 10. There are different verſions and expoſitions of this portion of ſcripture: but the text of the original is that, to which we muſt principally attend. There are three things of great conſequence mentioned: of which the firſt is, that the ſcep-

ter, or royalty, ſhall not fail in this reſpectable tribe, till Shiloh, the Meſſiah, ſhall come. Secondly, that a lawgiver, or rather, as moſt very properly expreſs it, an expounder of the law ſhall not fail; conſequently the law itſelf ſhall be in force; till the time of that divine perſon's appearance. Laſtly, to him ſhall be the gathering, or union of the Gentiles. Some interpret the words by ſaying—he will be *the expectation*, or *the deſire*, of the Gentiles: which makes little difference in the purport.

Concerning the Scepter, which was to depart from Iſrael.

In reſpect to the firſt article, people vary very much about the time, when *the ſcepter departed from Judah*; though both Jews and Chriſtians allow, that by Shiloh was ſignified the Meſſiah. *Some*, ſays the learned Joſeph Mede, *will have it to have been, when Pompey firſt brought the Jewiſh ſtate under the Roman ſubjection.—Others, when Herod, an Idumæan ſtranger, was by*

the

the Romans inveſted to be their king.—Others, not till the deſtruction of the Jewiſh ſtate by Titus. This laſt was the author's opinion: for then, he ſays, was the *calling of the Gentiles:* in which he was greatly miſtaken. J. Mede's works, vol. i. c. 8. Theſe ſurmiſes are all equally ill founded: and tend to ruin a prophecy of great conſequence, which with a proper attention will be found very preciſe and clear. They have imagined, that the ſcepter mentioned related to the temporal rule of Judea, either as a kingdom, or commonwealth. But the temporal government was varied, interrupted, alienated, and at one time, for ſeventy years, totally ruined: ſo that the ſcepter in this ſenſe had often departed; conſequently this interpretation is quite foreign to the purport of the prophecy. They did not conſider, that the polity of the Jewiſh nation was a ſacred inſtitution, and the government a theocracy: which was never interrupted, nor did it ever ceaſe, till the rejection of the Meſſiah prince. Hence we read, that *the Lord came from Sinai.—The Lord was king in Jeſhuron.*

Deut. xxxiii. 2, 5.—*Sing praiſes to our king.* Pſ. xlvii. 6.—*The holy one of Iſrael is our king.* Pſ. lxxxix. 18.—*Let Iſrael rejoice in him, that made him—let the children of Zion be joyful in their king.* Pſ. cxlix. 2.—In conſequence of this the children of Iſrael were ſaid to be—*a choſen people, a peculiar people,* and *the Lord's portion. The Lord hath choſen thee a ſpecial people.* Deut. vii. 6.—*Ye ſhall be unto me, ſaith the Lord, a kingdom of prieſts, and an holy nation.* Exod. xix. 6. Many other inſtances might be produced, by which the theocracy is manifeſtly aſcertained. Hence the people remained under this peculiar ſtate of government for above ſix hundred years from the death of the Patriarch, by whom the prophecy was given. But in the days of Samuel they impiouſly demanded a temporal king, that they might be governed after the manner of other nations. This prophet, who had acted as God's ſubſtitute both as a prieſt, and a judge, was greatly affected at their ſetting him aſide, after he had acted by them ſo uprightly. It however pleaſed God to indulge them in their

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This was the ſcepter, which departed from Judah, when Shiloh, the Meſſiah, came: at the ſame time the expounder of the law, and the law itſelf, ceaſed: and the gathering of the Gentiles ſucceeded. In conſequence of this theocracy our Saviour, while he lived, always ſpoke of himſelf as a ſovereign, and a king above all. The accuſation of the Jews was, that he ſaid, *he himſelf is Chriſt, the king.* Luke

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xxiii. 2. And when Pilate aſked him, *Art thou the king of the Jews?* he acknowledged the truth; though it was at the hazard of his life. Ver. 3. This he repeatedly maintained. At the time, when the Roman magiſtrate brought him forth before the people, it was the preparation of the paſſover, when they reſorted from all parts of Judea to Jeruſalem. The high-prieſt, and all of the prieſthood, and the principal perſons of the Jewiſh nation, and the whole nation in a manner, were preſent.—*And it was the preparation of the paſſover, and about the ſixth hour: and he* (Pilate) *ſaith unto the Jews,* BEHOLD YOUR KING. *But they cried out, Away with him; away with him: crucify him. Pilate ſaith unto them, Shall I crucify your king? The chief prieſts anſwered —We have no king, but Cæſar.* John xix. 14, 15. We are here brought to the criſis. This was the very point of time, when the ſcepter departed: when the theocracy ceaſed: when the whole body of the Jewiſh nation rejected the Meſſiah prince, and God their governor: when they allowed no one elſe, but an heathen monarch

to

to be their king. *Then Judah forſook God, which made him, and lightly eſteemed the rock of his ſalvation.* Deut. xxxii. 15. The apoſtate nation was now alienated from the Deity; and no longer a peculiar and choſen people. The ſcepter from which they revolted, departed from them: their law was abrogated; and a better, and a more rational, diſpenſation took place: and the Gentiles were invited to all the privileges of the goſpel. This laſt event happened about three years excluſive from the death of Chriſt. At this time St. Paul, the great apoſtle of the Gentiles, was miraculouſly converted from Judaiſm: and Cornelius, the Roman centurion, with his family, was admitted into the boſom of the church; theſe led the way to others without number in every region; who ſoon attained to the ſame ſpiritual advantages. Hence it was truly ſaid of the apoſtles—*Their ſound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.* Romans x. 18.

Thus has this very ancient prophecy been fulfilled in every part. And in the texture of this oracle there cannot have been

been any fraud: for, as I have before obſerved, the Jews, who are enemies to Chriſtianity, have been conſtantly in poſſeſſion of the original hiſtory. Add to this, that all of their race of old underſtood the prophecy to relate to Chriſt, and his coming. This is evident from their ancient paraphraſes, which they ſtile Targums *. In theſe the paſſage is univerſally made to refer to the *Meſſiah King*; whom however through their blindneſs they knew not.—Hence they have preſerved evidence in oppoſition to themſelves; and truth to their own confuſion.

The Prophecy concerning Chriſt by Moſes.

The next prophecy is that of Moſes, who tells the children of Iſrael, *the Lord thy God will raiſe up unto thee a prophet like*

* That the ancient Jews ſo underſtood it, appears by all the three Targums, or Chaldee Paraphraſts. The Targum called of Jeruſalem renders expreſly—*Until the time when king Meſſiah ſhall come—&c.* Onkelos, *Until Meſſiah comes, whoſe is the kingdom.* Likewiſe in their Talmud, Shiloh is among *the names of the Meſſiah.* See J. Mede's eighth Diſcourſe, Vol. i. p. 47.

unto me; unto him ye ſhall hearken. Deut. xviii. 15. I have ſhewn, that no perſon ever aroſe like to Moſes either as a law-giver, or a prophet, nor as a conductor of a people, nor as a worker of miracles. Nor had any one ſuch an intimate intercourſe with the Deity, excepting Chriſt our Saviour. He was like Moſes: but far ſuperior in every article. Therefore to him only did Moſes allude.

Prophecies from the later Prophets.

We have ſeen by a regular proceſs, that the great Saviour, and reſtorer, of mankind, was to be of the ſeed of the woman; of the family of Abraham; and laſtly of the tribe of Judah. We ſhall find, as we go on, that the prophecies will be ſtill more particular; and will point out the place of his birth, and of his reſidence: and alſo of many the moſt material circumſtances of his life. From the evidence, which is to enſue, we ſhall be farther informed, that he was to be of the lineage of David, the ſon of Jeſſe. This we learn from Iſaiah; who in a beautiful allegory deſcribes the

mildneſs of his rule, and the happy tendency of his religion, towards the ſoftening of the obdurate heart; and the eſtabliſhing of peace and charity, to which the fierceneſs and cruelty of man was to give way. *And there ſhall come forth a rod* (or ſcepter) *out of the ſtem of Jeſſe: and a branch ſhall grow out of his roots. And the ſpirit of the Lord ſhall reſt upon him, the ſpirit of wiſdom and underſtanding.—With righteouſneſs ſhall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity, for the meek of the earth.—The wolf alſo ſhall dwell with the lamb: and the leopard ſhall lie down with the kid: and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together, and a little child ſhall lead them.—And the ſucking child ſhall play on the hole of the aſp: and the weaned child ſhall put his hand upon the cockatrice den,* &c.—*And in that day, there ſhall be a root of Jeſſe; which ſhall ſtand for an enſign to the people. To it ſhall the Gentiles ſeek: and his reſt ſhall be glorious.* Ch. xi. 1, &c. &c.—*Behold the days come, ſaith the Lord, that I will raiſe unto David a righteous branch; and a king ſhall reign and proſper, and ſhall execute judgment and juſtice in the earth.* Jerem. xxiii. 5.

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—The place of his nativity was plainly marked out many centuries before his birth. *But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thouſands of Judah, yet out of thee ſhall he come forth unto me, that is to be ruler in Iſrael: whoſe goings forth have been of old, from everlaſting.* Micah v. 2. This can be applicable to no one but Chriſt. The nature of his office, and purport of his miſſion are alſo deſcribed: and his character in general given by the prophet Iſaiah in a moſt affecting manner. *Who hath believed our report: and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he ſhall grow up before him, as a tender plant: and as a root out of a dry ground. He hath neither form nor comelineſs: and when we ſhall ſee him there is no beauty, that we ſhould deſire him. He is deſpiſed, and rejected of men: a man of ſorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid, as it were, our faces from him. He was deſpiſed, and we eſteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our ſorrows: yet we did eſteem him ſtricken of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our tranſgreſſions: he was bruiſed for our iniquities. The chaſtiſement*

tiſement of our peace was upon him: and with his ſtripes we are healed. All we like ſheep have gone aſtray: we have turned every one to his own way: and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppreſſed, and he was afflicted: yet he opened not his mouth. He is brought as a lamb to the ſlaughter; and as a ſheep before his ſhearers is dumb, ſo openeth he not his mouth. He was taken from priſon, and from judgment: and who ſhall declare his generation? For he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the tranſgreſſion of my people was he ſtricken. And he made his grave with the wicked: and with the rich in his death: becauſe he had done no violence: neither was any deceit in his mouth. More is added by the prophet, who at laſt concludes with ſaying—*He was numbered with the tranſgreſſors: and he bare the ſin of many: and made interceſſion for the tranſgreſſors.* Iſaiah LIII. Whoever is the leaſt acquainted with the life of our Saviour in the goſpel, muſt ſee, how particularly applicable this is to him in every article: nor is there any other perſon upon record, to whom it can poſſibly relate. The ſame

prophet

prophet in another place has given us an account of the promulgation of a new law by Chriſt, and of its introduction among the nations of the earth. *It ſhall come to paſs in the laſt days, that the mountain of the Lord's houſe ſhall be eſtabliſhed in the tops of the mountains; and ſhall be exalted above the hills: and all nations ſhall flow unto it. And many people ſhall go and ſay, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the houſe of the God of Jacob: and he will teach us of his ways; and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion ſhall go forth the law; and the word of the Lord from Jeruſalem. And he ſhall judge among the nations; and ſhall rebuke many people: and they ſhall beat their ſwords into plough-ſhares, and their ſpears into pruning-hooks. Nation ſhall not riſe againſt nation: neither ſhall they learn war any more.* Iſaiah ii. 2, &c.—Such was the tendency of the law of Chriſt, to which the nations acceded. It breathes nothing but love, and charity, and univerſal forgiveneſs. And ſuch will be the happy effects, when the prophecy ſhall be fully compleated; and the kingdom of Chriſt univerſally eſta-

bliſhed. New light ſeems to be continually pouring in, and we make viſible advances daily.

We have ſeen, that according to the moſt early prophecy, our Saviour was to be born of the ſeed of the woman without any earthly father. This is repeated by Iſaiah, who mentions, that he ſhould be born of a virgin. The manner in which this prophecy is introduced, and the circumſtances with which it is connected, have cauſed ſome difficulties to the expoſitors. To theſe I ſhall at preſent ſay nothing: but take it, as it ſtands; independent of every other article. For it is a prophecy of great conſequence; and quoted by the Evangeliſt, who well knew its conſequence. *Behold a virgin ſhall conceive, and bear a ſon, and they ſhall call his name Immanuel: which being interpreted, is God with us.* Matthew i. 23. borrowed from Iſaiah vii. 14. This is not applicable to any of the ſons of men, but to Chriſt only. In conſequence of this the angel, that appeared to the virgin, unfolded to her this great truth—*Fear not, Mary; for thou haſt found favour with God.*

God. And behold, thou ſhalt conceive in thy womb; and bring forth a ſon; and ſhalt call his name Jeſus. He ſhall be great; and ſhall be called the ſon of the Higheſt: and the Lord God ſhall give unto him the throne of David his father. And he ſhall reign over the houſe of Jacob for ever: and of his kingdom there ſhall be no end. Luke i. 30, &c.

It has been obſerved, that Chriſt was to be born in Bethlehem Judah; as the prophet above-mentioned declared. But not only the place of his birth, but alſo of his chief reſidence is pointed out. Iſaiah had been ſpeaking of the diſtreſſes which were to be undergone by the people of Iſrael in the extreme parts of that kingdom, when they ſhould be invaded by the Aſſyrian. This is in the beginning of the eighth chapter; which concludes with this melancholy proſpect—*Lo! diſtreſs, and darkneſs; gloom, tribulation, and accumulated darkneſs.* The prophet then by a noble apoſtrophe betakes himſelf to future times, and deſcribes the change, that will be experienced in a different era. In my quotation I ſhall follow for the moſt part the verſion of the

learned biſhop Lowth, as corrected from the beſt manuſcripts. *But there ſhall not hereafter be darkneſs in the land, which was diſtreſſed. In the former time he debaſed the land of Zebulon, and the land Naphtali. But in the latter time he made it glorious: even the way of the ſea, beyond Jordan; Galilee of the nations. The people, who walked in darkneſs, have ſeen a great light: they that dwelled in the land of the ſhadow of death, unto them hath the light ſhined. Thou haſt multiplied the nation: thou haſt increaſed their joy: they rejoice before thee, as with the joy of harveſt: as they rejoice, who divide the ſpoil. For the yoke of his burthen, the ſtaff laid on his ſhoulder, the rod of his oppreſſor, haſt thou broken, as in the day of Midian.* He then mentions, that war was to ceaſe, and the implements of war to be aboliſhed: as an era of peace was to enſue, when the Meſſiah was to be born. *For the greaves of the armed warrior in the battle, and the garments rolled in blood, ſhall be for a burning, even fuel for the fire.* He then gives a reaſon for it; and deſcribes the Prince of Peace, who was to come.—*For unto us a*

child

child is born: unto us a ſon is given: and the government ſhall be upon his ſhoulder. And his name ſhall be called—Wonderful, Counſellor, the Mighty God, the Everlaſting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increaſe of his government and peace there ſhall be no end; upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom to fix it and to eſtabliſh it, with judgment and with juſtice, henceforth and for ever. The zeal of Jehovah, God of Hoſts will do this.* Iſaiah viii. 22. and ix. 1, &c.— At the time of our Saviour's coming there was an era of peace, ſuch as the world had not been witneſs to for ages. The temple of Janus at Rome was ſhut: the implements of battle were laid aſide: and all warlike habiliments for a time out of uſe: ſo that the prophecy in this acceptation was wonderfully compleated.

The Certainty of theſe Prophecies aſſerted.

Other prophecies might be produced to the ſame purpoſe: but theſe, I believe, will be ſufficient. They were afforded, as

* See Lowth's Comment upon Iſaiah, p. 22. and notes p. 74.

we have ſeen, at different periods, from the moſt early times: and by them the miraculous birth of Chriſt, the place of his birth, and the time of peace, in which he was born, together with his family, and deſcent, are plainly pointed out. The purport alſo of his miſſion, his office as mediator, his expiation for ſin, his divine nature, and exalted character, are foretold. The introduction likewiſe of a new law, the rejection of the Jewiſh nation, and the calling of the Gentiles, are repeatedly mentioned: all which we know to have been preciſely fulfilled. A perſon muſt be not only ſlow of heart, but hardened to the laſt degree, who can reſiſt ſuch evidence. The only way, for an infidel to evade it, is to aſſert, that the whole was a forgery, and an interpolation. But who could forge theſe paſſages? Or introduce them, where they are now found? The only perſons, who had a true knowledge of the ſacred writings, were the Chriſtians, and the Jews. Now at the time, when the apoſtles lived, the ſcriptures were in the hands of the latter, who had ſynagogues in every city, and

town

town of conſequence; where the law, and the prophets, were every ſabbath read and expounded. The Jews are ſaid in theſe times to have been particularly ſcrupulous about the conſervation of the ſacred books; ſo that they would not ſuffer an iöta to be added, or omitted. How then could any Chriſtian have introduced a ſingle word without immediate detection? Beſides the evangeliſts quote from the Greek verſion, which was in the hands of all the Helleniſtick Jews; for whoſe uſe the verſion had been made near four hundred years before the promulgation of the goſpel. If then there be a charge of falſifying, it muſt fall upon the Jews, who had the original ſcriptures in their poſſeſſion. But how could they in any antecedent age, without divine inſpiration, foreſee theſe great events, which were to come? If theſe ſcriptures were inſpired, as we know them to have been, all, that we contend for, is allowed; and they are of divine original. Beſides it is contrary to reaſon to imagine, that the Jews at any time would invent articles to their own infamy; and which afforded ſuch

ſtrong atteſtation of their rejection and ruin. They providentially ſtill exiſt, and are found very numerous in various parts of the world; and among the moſt enlightened nations. The ſacred oracles remain in their hands: to which any body may appeal; and ſee, if they in any article of moment differ from thoſe, which are in uſe among the Chriſtians. In ſhort, the Jews have been providentially made living witneſſes to the truth of the holy ſcriptures. They prove to a demonſtration, that no fraud could poſſibly have taken place.

Of the Birth of our Saviour: and his Reſidence at Nazareth.

In conformity with theſe prophecies our bleſſed Saviour was born in Bethlehem of Judea; and at a moſt propitious ſeaſon in the reign of Auguſtus Cæſar; when there was peace over the whole Roman empire. This peace continued with very little interruption during the courſe of that prince's reign: which afforded a favourable opportunity for promoting the great ſcheme of

Providence

Providence now in hand. This was the time, of which it was ſaid, that *nation ſhould not riſe up againſt nation: when the law was to come from Zion: and they were to beat their ſwords into plough-ſhares, and their ſpears into pruning-hooks.* See Micah iv. 3. Our Saviour likewiſe, as it had been foretold, was born of a virgin, and of the houſe and lineage of David. We are informed, that his mother had been betrothed to Joſeph: but before ſhe was received by him as his wife, ſhe was found with child by the Holy Ghoſt. *Then Joſeph her* (affianced) *huſband, being a juſt man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on theſe things, behold the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, ſaying, Joſeph, thou ſon of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife; for that, which is conceived in her, is of the Holy Ghoſt. And ſhe ſhall bring forth a ſon, and thou ſhalt call his name Jeſus: for he ſhall ſave his people from their ſins.—Then Joſeph being raiſed from his ſleep, did, as the angel of the Lord had bidden him.* Matt. i. 19, &c.

After this was the ſlaughter of all the children at Bethlehem and its neighbourhood, which were two years old and under. The order for this ſlaughter of the innocents came from the tyrant Herod, who imagined that among thoſe ſlain the child Jeſus would certainly be included. But Joſeph had been previouſly admoniſhed in another dream to flee into Egypt, and there to remain with the child and its mother, till Herod was dead. There is ſomething very remarkable in theſe hiſtories, which ſeems to have been overlooked. Had the angel appeared to Joſeph any otherwiſe, than in a dream: had he come, in a human ſhape; or had a prophet been ſent with the meſſage, and ordered him—*to take unto him his betrothed wife*; ſome infidel would have ſaid, it was an illuſion, and fraud: that Joſeph was deceived by a falſe appearance: and the miraculous birth of our Saviour would have been called in queſtion, or denied. But as the intimation was given by a dream, it muſt have been attended with uncommon energy; and have made a moſt powerful impreſſion. The

law

law of Moſes was very ſevere againſt thoſe, who had forfeited their virginity: and the Jewiſh nation were particularly ſcrupulous upon this head: nor would any man take to him a young woman for a wife, who had given up this prerogative. I ſay then, that theſe dreams of Joſeph muſt have been attended with the moſt forcible conviction, which made him take to himſelf a virgin, who in appearance was not a virgin; to adopt her ſon for his own; to ſhelter, and preſerve him in danger; and to fly with them both into a foreign country, to the detriment of his occupation, and at the hazard of his life. Nothing but the hand of God could have effected this.

Concerning our Saviour's Hiſtory antecedent to his Miniſtry.

Upon the death of Herod the holy family returned from Egypt; and dwelt at Nazareth in Galilee, called Galilee of the Gentiles. For it conſiſted of a mixed race of people; and was held in little eſtimation by the people of Judea. Every thing relating

lating to our Saviour's birth and parentage tended to inſpire humility. He was the reputed ſon of a mechanick; born in a ſtable; nurſed in a manger; ſaluted by ſhepherds; and he was brought up in an obſcure city of Zebulon, among the outcaſts of Iſrael. This was certainly appointed for wiſe ends; that he might live unknown, and unmoleſted, to the time of his manifeſting himſelf to the world.

Between this ſtate of our Saviour's infancy and the time of his miniſtry an interval is obſervable, in which little is ſaid concerning him. Yet that little affords matter of much moment; and leads us to anticipate all that excellence, which afterwards enſued. For it is ſaid, that *the child grew, and waxed ſtrong in ſpirit: filled with wiſdom: and the grace of God was upon him.* And in another place we are told—*Jeſus encreaſed in wiſdom and ſtature: and in favour with God and man.* Luke ii. 40, and 52. Another inſtance of the promiſing diſpoſition of our Saviour is afforded by the ſame evangeliſt, who mentions, that he attended his parents, when he was about twelve

twelve years old, to Jeruſalem, at the feaſt of the paſſover; and that he was for ſome time miſſed by them. *And it came to paſs, that after three days they found him in the temple, ſitting in the midſt of the doctors; both hearing them and aſking them queſtions. And all that heard him were aſtoniſhed at his underſtanding, and anſwers.* Ver. 46, 47. We find even at this age his native modeſty, and humility, prevailing. He did not, with all his wiſdom, preſume to teach: but was *hearing* and *inquiring:* and giving an anſwer, when it was required of him. Yet ſuch was his underſtanding, that *he might have informed princes, and taught ſenators wiſdom.*

When he was about the age of thirty years, after having been baptized by John, he entered upon his miniſtry; and ſhewed that he had a divine miſſion by the ſurprizing miracles, which he wrought. This grand diſplay was firſt made in the region near Nazareth, where he reſided. Matt. iv. 23. Then was that fulfilled, which had been foretold by Iſaiah, of *the land of Zebulon, and the land of Naphtali, by the way of the*

the ſea—Galilee of nations. The people, who walked in darkneſs, have ſeen a great light: they, that dwell in the land of the ſhadow of death, upon them hath the light ſhined.—For unto us a child is born; unto us a ſon is given, &c. Iſaiah ix. 1, 2, 3, &c.

Concerning his firſt Diſplay of Miracles.

In this part of the world our Saviour firſt exhibited his miraculous powers: and afterwards diſplayed them in other places of Judea, and in Jeruſalem itſelf. But the elders of the people, and thoſe of the prieſthood, and the people of Judea in general, were ever hoſtile towards him. When he had healed a man upon the ſabbath-day, to which St. John alludes in his ſeventh chapter, the Jews were ready to kill him. Upon his expoſtulating with them, many of the people were greatly affected, and *ſaid, Of a truth this is the prophet. Others ſaid, This is the Chriſt; but ſome ſaid, Shall Chriſt come out of Galilee?* And when one of their rulers ventured to ſpeak in his favour, the anſwer was, *Art thou alſo of Galilee?*

lilee? Search and look: for out of Galilee ariſeth no prophet. This one circumſtance ſet aſide all the ſuperlative goodneſs of Chriſt. All his virtues and all his miraculous powers, which he continually exerted for the good of others, were rejected and deſpiſed. Nay, they were attributed to the devil; and to *Beelzebub, the prince of the devils*; and all this becauſe Chriſt was a reputed Galilean. Such is the force of prejudice: which though founded in fancy, is often the laſt, and the moſt difficult, obſtacle in the way of truth.

Of the ſubſequent Part of his Life: and of his Miracles.

The time, when our Saviour entered upon his miniſtry, was, when he had attained to his thirtieth year of age. This was in conformity to the law of Moſes, mentioned in Numbers iv. 47, &c. to which, while he lived, he held himſelf obedient. In this miniſtry he perſevered for three years and an half, when he was cut off by the unbelieving Jews. His miracles were for the moſt part exhibited

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in Galilee, and in its vicinity: that he might not too early excite the jealouſy of the prieſts and princes at Jeruſalem; and be brought into trouble before his time. He therefore enjoins ſome of thoſe, upon whom he had performed miraculous cures, to be ſilent concerning theſe operations; and only to make thoſe offerings, appointed by the law. But though the Jews ſought his life; and he was told of the evil deſigns of Herod Antipas, yet he never failed to go up to Jeruſalem at the appointed feaſts. At other times, as I have mentioned, he preached the Goſpel near Nazareth and the neighbouring cities. Hither the people in multitudes followed him, who were captivated with the excellence of his doctrines, as well as aſtoniſhed at his miracles. *And Jeſus went about all Galilee, teaching in the ſynagogues, and preaching the goſpel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of ſickneſs, and all manner of diſeaſe among the people. And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all ſick people, that were taken with divers diſeaſes, and torments; and thoſe, which*

were poſſeſſed with devils, and thoſe which were lunatick, and thoſe that had the palſy, and he healed them. And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jeruſalem, and from beyond Jordan. And from Idumea, and thoſe about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they heard what great things he did, came unto him. Matt. iv. 23. Mark iii. 7. We find, that theſe ſupernatural operations were performed in the blaze of day, and before a multitude of witneſſes, at all times. This prepared the people for the reception of the goſpel, when it was afterwards preached by the apoſtles. And to this was in great meaſure owing that rapid progreſs it for a time made among the Jews: who were otherwiſe ſo attached to the religion of their fathers, and the law of Moſes. The diſcourſes of our Saviour were very ſublime, and delivered with great dignity: yet they were attended with ſuch grace and goodneſs, expreſſed with ſuch plainneſs, and illuſtrated often with ſuch appoſite and pleaſing analogy, that they captivated all, who heard them. So

deſirous

deſirous were the people of this ſpiritual food, that they ſometimes forgot the requiſites for the body: and there are two inſtances, when many of them would have fainted with hunger, had they not been relieved by the miracle of the loaves and fiſhes. In theſe miracles we ſhall never find an unmeaning proceſs, and a mere arbitrary diſplay of power. On the contrary, they were always ſignificant and rational: and there was a due call for the operation. They likewiſe proceeded from conſummate benevolence and compaſſion: and tended to the good both of the body and the ſoul. When he was going with his diſciples to a city called Naïn, not far from Capernaum, it is ſaid that he was attended with much people. *And when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold there was a dead man carried out.* But people die daily: what reaſon was here for any divine interpoſition? Upon further inquiry we ſhall find, there was a juſt cauſe both for compaſſion, and aſſiſtance. For the deceaſed appears to have been a young man, unexpectedly taken off: add to this—

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he was an only ſon of his mother: and this mother a widow. And we may judge of her worth, and the character of the deceaſed, from the numbers, that followed her to pay their laſt regard at the funeral. *And when the Lord ſaw her, he had compaſſion upon her; and ſaid unto her, Weep not. And he came and touched the bier; and they that bare him ſtood ſtill. And he ſaid, Young man, I ſay unto thee, Ariſe. And he that was dead ſat up, and began to ſpeak: and he delivered him to his mother. And the rumour of him* (Chriſt Jeſus) *went forth* (not only in Galilee: but) *throughout all Judea: and the region round about.* Luke vii. 11, &c. We find here ſufficient reaſon for the compaſſion of Chriſt to be moved; and his heavenly powers exerted; as the diſtreſs of an excellent but unhappy mother was relieved: and the whole tended to the glory of God; to which ſuch numbers bore witneſs.

Of the Centurion's Servant healed.

There is a preceding miracle in the ſame part of St. Luke's goſpel, which was per-

formed upon the Centurion's ſervant, whom our Saviour healed of his infirmity. In all theſe hiſtories there is a great deal contained in a ſmall ſpace: and they abound with many hidden truths, which demand proper attention to be brought to light. When Chriſt was at Capernaum, *a certain Centurion's ſervant, who was dear unto him, was ſick, and ready to die. And when he* (the Centurion) *heard of Jeſus, he ſent to him the elders of the Jews, beſeeching him that he would come, and heal his ſervant. And, when they came to Jeſus, they beſought him inſtantly, ſaying, that he was worthy, for whom he ſhould do this. For he loveth our nation; and he hath built us a ſynagogue.* Here again we have another rational inducement for our Saviour to exert his benevolence and power. For the Centurion was undoubtedly a proſelyte, a worſhipper of the one true God: and at the ſame time entertained a ſtrong faith in Chriſt, to whoſe aſſiſtance he looked up. The elders too, who beſought in his behalf, had the like faith, as appears by their importunity. This was always a neceſſary

article

article towards obtaining the divine interpoſition. Our Saviour accordingly went with the elders in order to perform this ſalutary office. *But when he was not far from the houſe, the Centurion ſent friends to him, ſaying—Lord, trouble not thyſelf, for I am not worthy, that thou ſhouldſt enter under my roof: wherefore neither thought I myſelf worthy to come unto thee: but ſay in a word; and my ſervant ſhall be healed. And yet I am a man, who have authority and command* conferred upon me, having ſoldiers under me: and I ſay to one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh: and to my ſervant, Do this, and he doeth it.* Here we find ſtrong faith and a ſuitable humility; with great reverence towards the perſon addreſſed: and all this from one much eſteemed, and of rank in the part of the world, where he reſided. Our Saviour accordingly granted his requeſt, and healed his ſervant at a word: and turning to his diſciples and the people, who followed him,

* This certainly was meant by the Centurion, when he delivered his ſentiments. The context proves it.

ſhewed his approbation of the Centurion's behaviour. *I ſay unto you, I have not found ſo great faith: no, not in Iſrael.* Luke vii. 2, 3, 4, &c.

We have a great many of Chriſt's miracles recorded: but there were far more performed, as we may learn from the evangeliſts. For when John the Baptiſt ſent his diſciples, on account of their diffidence, to know of Chriſt, whether he was the Meſſiah, or not; it is ſaid, *in that ſame hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil ſpirits: and unto many that were blind, he gave ſight.* By this he intimated, what he, at another time, declared more plainly—*if you believe not me, yet believe my works:* for they plainly teſtify who I am.

Concerning the raiſing of Lazarus from the dead.

Out of theſe miracles recorded I ſhall mention one more; which is deſcribed very minutely and circumſtantially by St. John, as abounding with matter well worthy of our conſideration. It relates to a perſon

perſon named Lazarus, to whom as well as to his ſiſters our Saviour ſhewed great regard on account of their faith and goodneſs. He died at Bethany, a place, which was little more than two miles from Jeruſalem. It was the purpoſe of Chriſt to raiſe him from the dead; and to make his recovery a prelude to his own reſurrection, which was to happen very ſoon. From hence people might know, that by the ſame power, by which he raiſed up Lazarus, he could raiſe himſelf; and ultimately raiſe all mankind at the laſt day. And as the ſcene of action was to be near the great city, Jeruſalem, the miracle would be a matter of notoriety, to which numbers would be eye-witneſſes. This circumſtance would diminiſh many doubts and ſcruples, when he ſhould in a very ſhort time riſe himſelf from the dead, and diſpoſe many perſons to accede to the goſpel. Jeſus had told his diſciples, that Lazarus was ſick, and afterwards mentioned more plainly, that he *was dead*. He ſeems to have been at this time at a diſtance, and probably near Enon and Bethabara,

where John formerly had baptized. When therefore he came to Bethany, Lazarus had been dead four days, and after ſuch an interval in a ſtate of putrefaction. Juſt as he was arrived, Martha, one of the ſiſters, met him full of grief, and ſaid, *Lord, if thou hadſt been here, my brother had not died. But I know, that even now whatever thou wilt aſk of God, God will give it thee. Jeſus ſaid, Thy brother ſhall riſe again. Martha ſaid unto him, I know, that he ſhall riſe again at the reſurrection, at the laſt day. Jeſus ſaid unto her, I am the reſurrection, and the life, he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet ſhall he live.* Notwithſtanding this he could not wean his beſt friends of their prejudices; nor induce them to place a ſure truſt in his divine power. Though he was grieved at their hardneſs of heart; yet when he ſaw the two ſiſters in tears, and the Jews alſo that were with them in tears, he was greatly affected, and wept himſelf. He at laſt came to the tomb, which was a cave, with a ſtone over it: and he ordered the ſtone to be removed. Martha ſtill unbelieving, intimated, that

the

the removal would be to no purpoſe; as her brother was now in a ſtate of putrefaction: for he had *been dead four days.* By this we learn, that there could be no deceit in this caſe. It was no deliquium nor any epileptic diſorder: for the body was not only dead, but, as they had reaſon to believe, in a ſtate of corruption. Jeſus was affected at this want of faith, and gave her a gentle rebuke, which compaſſion ſoftened—*Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldſt believe, thou ſhouldſt ſee the glory of God? Then they took away the ſtone, where the dead was laid.* Upon this our Saviour ſtopped awhile to offer up an awful addreſs to Heaven, which muſt have raiſed the expectation, and increaſed the reverence of all, who beheld the operation. *And Jeſus lifted up his eyes, and ſaid, Father, I thank thee that thou haſt heard me. And I knew that thou hearеſt me at all times: but becauſe of the people, which ſtand by, I ſaid it, that they may believe, that thou haſt ſent me.* We find, that the ultimate of this proceſs was to give glory to God; and to aſcertain the divine commiſſion of his ſon Chriſt

Jeſus: alſo to confirm his diſciples in their faith: and to open the eyes of others, that they might hereafter embrace the truth. *When*, therefore, *Chriſt had thus ſpoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.* The dead immediately heard his voice; and Lazarus came out of the tomb in his grave cloaths, and appeared to the aſtoniſhed multitude. In conſequence of this not only his diſciples were more eſtabliſhed in their faith; but many of the Jews, people of Jeruſalem, when they *had ſeen the things, which Jeſus did, believed on him.* And, as I before ſaid, this miracle diſpoſed the minds of people towards the belief of his own reſurrection afterwards. For he, who could reſtore a perſon from a ſtate of corruption, was able to raiſe himſelf, who *was not to ſee corruption.* Some of thoſe, who had been preſent, returned to the city and diſcloſed, what had been done. *Then gathered the chief prieſts, and the Phariſees a council, and ſaid, What do we? for this man doth many miracles.* See John xi. Hence we may perceive, that nobody entertained any doubt concerning the mighty

works

works performed. Yet ſuch was their perverſeneſs, that *from that day they took counſel together to put him to death.—And the chief prieſts conſulted, that they might put Lazarus alſo to death.* Chap. xii. 10.

The happy Conſequences of theſe Miracles.

We find, what neceſſity there was for miracles, to get the better of this backwardneſs in ſome, and this hardneſs of heart in others. And we may farther perceive, what an excellent deſign, and what wiſdom, appears in all theſe operations. Firſt they were calculated for the immediate good of the perſon or perſons, on whoſe account they were performed. Next for the honour of God, whoſe worſhip and reverence were by theſe means greatly enhanced. They likewiſe aſcertained the divine miſſion of Chriſt, who, by his extraordinary powers ſhewed that he was the Meſſiah promiſed to the world. Laſtly they diſpoſed people to the reception of the goſpel, when after his reſurrection it was preached at Jeruſalem, and in its vicinity. Hence

the progreſs of the goſpel was even in this city wonderful: ſo that from the exhortation of Peter many were baptized; and in one day *there were added three thouſand ſouls*. Acts ii. 41. In another place it is ſaid, that *many of them, which heard the word believed: and the number of the men was about five thouſand*. Acts iv. 4. It was in the midſt of a perſecution, when the apoſtles firſt began to preach the word. We are likewiſe told ſoon afterwards, that *the word of God increaſed, and the number of the diſciples multiplied in Jeruſalem greatly: and a great company of the prieſts were obedient to the faith*. Chap. vi. 7. This wonderful progreſs of the goſpel could never have been effected but by the preaching and miracles of our Saviour antecedently; and to the effuſion of the Holy Ghoſt afterwards, by which the apoſtles were gifted with the like divine powers.

The Criterion, or Teſt of Miracles.

It has been often aſked, as there have been accounts of miracles in all ages, *how are we to diſtinguiſh between the true and the falſe? By what rule can we proceed in order to make a proper eſtimate?* Let the miracles of our Saviour be laid down for a rule, by which others may be meaſured, and ſee, if thoſe others will abide that teſt. See, if there were a due call for the divine interpoſition: if the objects were worthy of that influence, which is afforded by the Holy Spirit. Did they tend to the good of the ſoul, as well as the health of the body: and were they attended with that internal evidence, with which thoſe of our Saviour were accompanied *? And were they authenticated

* It is ſaid, if I miſtake not, in the life of Ignatius Loyola, the patron ſaint of the Jeſuits, that he was importuned very much to play at billiards by a perſon, who was a proficient in the game. He excuſed himſelf for a time, as being quite ignorant, and not capable of playing. At laſt being continually ſolicited, he engaged with the other perſon, and put his ball into the hazard every ſtroke: ſo that he defeated him entirely. This has been mentioned as a miracle. But was there here any call for the divine interpoſition? Was the object

thenticated by ſuch external evidence, as thoſe in the Scriptures are known to have been: and had they multitudes, who witneſſed to their truth? For, as the apoſtle ſays, of the operations of Chriſt, *Theſe things were not done in a corner.* From hence we may obtain a criterion by which we may diſtinguiſh between truth, and falſehood; and not be miſguided by any legendary fictions.

object worthy of the Holy Ghoſt? Was there any apparent neceſſity for the operation; or did it afford any mental or bodily advantage? Laſtly, was it ſo atteſted, as to claim the leaſt belief? No. All theſe requiſites therefore being wanting we may eaſily paſs judgment upon the credibility of the miracle: and give it up, with thouſands from the ſame quarter, as an idle and unworthy fiction. See the life of Ignatius by Maffeius.

Eunapius mentions, that Jamblichus the Chalcidian was a worker of miracles; of which he gives one inſtance. The philoſopher was with ſeveral of his followers at Gadara in Cœloſyria; where were ſome famous hot-baths. Here to ſhow his magic art he put his hand into the water, and after having uttered a few words he called forth the two divinities of the waters. They came out at his command, and appeared like little children, and ran and hung upon his neck, and hugged him as if he were their father. After a little time they quitted him, and he ordered them back to their former place to the admiration of all who beheld him. Life of Jamb. p. 26. Let this be tried in the ſame manner, and ſee if it will abide the teſt. The miracles of the Abbè Paris are of the ſame claſs.

Farther

Farther Proofs of the Goſpel, and the Miracles of Chriſt.

I have mentioned that multitudes were witneſſes to the miracles of Chriſt. Undoubtedly thouſands, and ten thouſands could have given atteſtation to their being performed. This proves to a demonſtration, that there is in their hiſtory no fiction: and theſe wonderful works were certainly accompliſhed, and believed. For the evangeliſts wrote primarily for the Jews: and St. Matthew's goſpel is particularly ſaid to have been in Hebrew, for the ſake of the people in Judea. Now had there been no truth in theſe operations; if Chriſt did not feed the five thouſand, nor raiſe the dead; nor give ſight to the blind: theſe thouſands, and ten thouſands would have riſen up againſt the apoſtles, and convicted them of a moſt groſs forgery. It was impoſſible for the diſciples of Chriſt to have publiſhed to all the inhabitants of Judea a pretended ſeries of wonders, which would have been contradicted in every inſtance, and univerſally

ſally exploded. They would have ruined their cauſe by the very means, which they adopted for its ſupport. But the fact was impoſſible. How can we ſuppoſe that a few men of Galilee, obnoxious, and of no eſteem, could perſuade a whole nation, that they beheld, what they never ſaw: and that they heard, what was never told them? Such an impoſture could not have been conceived; much leſs carried into execution. They would never have dared to have mentioned, that there was darkneſs over the whole land at the crucifixion, if no ſuch darkneſs had prevailed. The goſpel therefore was not founded on fiction; the rapid progreſs ſhews it: and the miracles are paſt controverſy confirmed by the numbers of the Jewiſh nation, who ſubſcribed to theſe truths.

But to obviate every objection, that may be made, I will ſuppoſe, that a queſtion may ſtill be aſked—*How can we be ſure, that the evangeliſts wrote ſo early; and that ſo many were ſtill living, who had been eye-witneſſes of the facts?* This, I anſwer, may be proved, by writers of the apoſtolic age; and by

by others in a ſeries immediately after them: who quote the evangeliſts at large. I believe, not a ſingle chapter is omitted; nor a ſingle verſe, that relates to any doctrine. Theſe writers were widely ſeparated, being of Syria, and Aſſyria; of Samaria, Aſia Minor, Alexandria, and Carthage. Between theſe places there was little, or no, correſpondence, and conſequently there could be no colluſion. In ſhort we know for certain, that two of the evangeliſts were the diſciples of Chriſt: and the two others muſt have lived at the ſame time, but were the diſciples of Peter and Paul. The Apoſtle * St. John ſays, that he was witneſs to the things, which he deſcribed. Theſe evangeliſts all wrote in the time of the Jewiſh kingdom, before the city, and polity were ruined. They were of the ſame lineage; and addreſſed themſelves to the Jews, firſt, and then to other people. This is certain, if there be any certainty in hiſtory. Hence I return to my former argument—that it is impoſſible for theſe writers to have mentioned ſo many wonderful operations, if they were not true:

* 1 Epiſt. C. i. v. 1, 2.

and

and to have introduced thouſands of Jews as eye-witneſſes, if thouſands, and myriads, were ſtill living, who could have contradicted every article. The miracles therefore were certainly well known and acknowledged. The very enemies of Chriſtianity, ſuch as Celſus, Porphyry, Julian, did not pretend to deny them: though ſome would fain attribute the performance to magic. Theſe writers refer continually to the ſcriptures: quote innumerable paſſages: and allow the mighty operations there recorded, as will be preſently ſhewn. To theſe miracles was owing the rapid progreſs of the goſpel among the Jews: bigotted and averſe, as they at firſt were. It ſoon ſpread, and was received among various nations. The Jews ſtill remain: but how ſeldom is it that we now can make a ſingle proſelyte? I ſpeak not of the Jews of Portugal, and Spain, who are converted by fire and faggot; but I ſpeak of rational conviction. There is reaſon to think, that there were more converted by the apoſtles in one day, than have ſince been won over in the laſt thouſand years. This was effected by ſigns and

wonders.

wonders. Upon theſe evidences God founded his church: *and the gates of hell ſhall not prevail againſt it.*

There is another truth, of which we may be certain: this is, that the evangelical writings have been tranſmitted to us uncorrupted. Of this we are aſſured from the uniformity in the numerous quotations made in different places, and at different eras. The diſputes alſo in the church, and even the hereſies, were attended with this good; that they put the writers concerned upon their guard, and made them carefully watch their adverſaries: ſo that no alteration of any conſequence could be admitted. This may be farther proved from the different verſions, which in all the material articles agree.

After all, the ſtrongeſt proof in favour of the goſpel hiſtories, to a well-diſpoſed mind, ariſes from the excellence of the doctrines, which they contain: and which are no where elſe to be found. The divine truths, and the pure and rational worſhip, which, excluſive of many other parts of

 ſcripture,

ſcripture, may be learned from our Saviour's ſermon on the mount, or from the four laſt chapters of St. Paul to the Romans, were unknown to the wiſeſt of the Gentile writers. They exceed every thing that Cicero or Seneca taught: or that is to be found in the ethics of Ariſtotle or Plutarch. Even Socrates had no idea of the mental perfection recommended. It was beyond the conception of unaſſiſted man.

The many excellent books, which have been in different ages written, either in defence of the Chriſtian religion, or as comments upon its doctrines, ſhew the excellence of the ſubject, of which they treat. For what our Saviour ſays of men, may be very juſtly applied to thoſe repoſitories of divine truths.—* *Ye ſhall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns? or figs of thiſtles?——A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit.—— Wherefore by their fruits ye ſhall know them.* In ſhort it muſt be the fountain of

* Matt. vii. 16, &c.

life,

life, from whence ſo many ſalutary ſtreams are derived. Had Chriſtianity been an idle ſtory, ſuch an excellent ſyſtem could not have been founded upon it.

Concerning the Opinions, which prevailed, of the Coming of the Meſſiah.

Our Saviour by the prophet Haggai is ſtiled *the deſire of all nations.* Chap. ii. 7. And he is alluded to in the prophecy of the patriarch Jacob, according to the Greek verſion, *as the expectation of the Gentiles.* Thus much is certain, that about the time, that he came into the world, and for ſome time afterwards, a perſon of his character was expected. Joſephus, who was born ſo very ſoon after our Saviour's death, takes notice of this; but imagined, like the reſt of the Jews, that the perſon was to be a temporal prince. What is extraordinary, the ſame hiſtory is afforded us by ſome Gentile writers; whoſe evidence muſt be of conſequence. The firſt of theſe is Tacitus, who ſeems to confine the opinion to the Jews, *many of whom*, he ſays, *were per-*

ſuaded, from the contents of their ſacred writings, that the eaſtern country would be prevalent: and from Judea would come thoſe, who were to have the ſovereignty of the whole world. Hiſt. l. v. c. 13. p. 562. var. Suetonius, like the two former, lived in the firſt century, and mentions the ſame circumſtance; but ſpeaks of the notion as more widely extended. *An ancient and uniform opinion had prevailed all over the eaſt, that it was deſtined for people from Judea about this time to rule over the world.* Theſe writers refer the prophecy to Veſpaſian: with whoſe character it does not at all accord. To this application Joſephus led the way out of adulation to the emperor. In doing this he acted againſt conviction: for as he was a Jew, and of the prieſthood, he muſt have known, that Veſpaſian was not of the ſeed of Abraham; nor of the tribe of Judah; nor of the family of David; nor born at Bethlehem; nor the offspring of a virgin. Yet, however miſapplied, theſe are wonderful atteſtations. They ſhew, that the ancient prophecies exiſted: and we know to whom they related, and that they

were

were literally fulfilled in Chriſt, the true Meſſiah.

To this general expectation perhaps was owing the expedition of the Magi from the eaſt to pay their homage to the infant King of the Jews. They probably came from Perſia; where traditions concerning the birth of Chriſt had been preſerved from the time of Daniel, and others of the prophetic family, who had reſided at Suſa, and in other parts of that country. From them I imagine that this knowledge was derived: and from their doctrines and example the Perſians, though Zabians, had maintained a purer mode of worſhip, than any of the neighbouring nations. For this reaſon they were directed by a heavenly light, and bleſſed with the ſight of their Saviour.

Farther Account of the Miniſtry, and Doctrines of Chriſt.

At the time appointed by the Moſaic law Our Saviour entered upon his miniſtry: and proved his divine miſſion by a ſeries of wonderful operations. At the ſame time he began to preach the goſpel,

and to introduce a new diſpenſation; by which all the types and figures of the old law, and all the ceremonies, and ſacrifices for ſin, were to be made void, and ceaſe. In the room of theſe he inſtituted a more rational worſhip, the religion of the heart. Hence it was very truly ſaid, that *the law was given by Moſes, but grace and truth came by Jeſus Chriſt.* He ſhewed, that our firſt regard was to be paid to our Creator: whom we are to worſhip and love, with all our heart, and with all our ſoul, and with all our mind, and with all our ſtrength. Mark xii. 30. *This is the firſt and great commandment.* We are farther told, that God is a *ſpirit: and they that worſhip Him, muſt worſhip Him in ſpirit and in truth. That He ſeeth in ſecret, but rewardeth openly.* That He is the Father of all, a God of all goodneſs and mercy; and that through the Son, we have acceſs to Him, and are reconciled by his blood: and from thence have the privilege of addreſſing Him, as Father, being *His children by adoption and grace.* In reſpect to our neighbour, we are to love him as ourſelves: for *love is the fulfilling of the law.*

law. We are ordered to avoid all revenge; and all retaliation, as far as reaſon and juſtice will permit: and never to let *the ſun go down upon our wrath. To love our enemies: to do good to thoſe, that hate us:* and not to *return railing for railing, but contrariwiſe bleſſing.* That by kind returns, and friendly overtures, we may *heap coals of fire upon the head of our enemies*; to the production of charity and peace. For the completion of the whole this moſt excellent rule is given—*As ye would, that men ſhould do to you, do ye alſo to them.* Luke vi. 31. We are likewiſe to retain no national prejudices, as we are brethren, however diſperſed, all of one family: and a mutual affection ſhould ſubſiſt between all, whether Samaritan, Jew, or Gentile.

We are likewiſe ordered to be obedient to rulers; and to all thoſe, who are put in authority over us. *Obey them,* ſaith the Apoſtle, *who have rule over you.* Heb. xiii. 17. *Put them in mind to be ſubject to principalities, and powers; to obey magiſtrates: to be ready to every good work; to ſpeak evil of no man: to be no brawlers; but*

gentle, ſhewing all meekneſs to all men. Ep. to Titus iii. 1, 2. In another place he diſtinguiſhes between the works of the Spirit, and the works of the fleſh. *Now the works of the fleſh are manifeſt:* and among theſe are *—hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, ſtrife, ſeditions, hereſies.—But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-ſuffering, gentleneſs, goodneſs, faith, meekneſs, temperance. Againſt theſe there is no law.* Galat. v. 19, &c. He therefore gives this general ordinance: *Let every ſoul be ſubject to the higher powers: for there is no power but of God. Whoſoever therefore reſiſteth the power, reſiſteth the ordinance of God: and they, that reſiſt, ſhall receive to themſelves damnation.——Render therefore to all their due: tribute, to whom tribute is due: cuſtom, to whom cuſtom: fear, to whom fear: honour, to whom honour.* Romans xiii. 1. 2—7. St. Peter ſpeaks to the ſame purpoſe: *Submit yourſelves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's ſake: whether it be to the king, as ſupreme; or unto governors, as unto them, that are ſent by him for the puniſhment of evil doers; and for the praiſe of them, that do well. For ſo is the*

will

will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to ſilence the ignorance of fooliſh men. The Apoſtle then concludes with the following ſummary advice: *Honour all men: love the brotherhood: fear God: honour the King.* 1 Peter ii. 13, &c.

In reſpect to the duty, which we owe to ourſelves, we are above all things enjoined to obſerve mental purity; and not to ſuffer our eyes to wander, nor our thoughts to rove; nor to indulge in any ideal ſenſuality, to the hurt of our immortal ſoul. On the contrary we are to preſent our bodies a living ſacrifice; and perform a *reaſonable and ſpiritual ſervice:* and make an offering of the heart; which is the true and acceptable offering with God. This is the moſt compleat ſyſtem, that ever was framed: to which no worldly philoſophy, no moral ſenſe, no light of nature, was able to give birth. Its excellence ſhews its divine origin; as nothing but wiſdom from above could have diſcloſed theſe heavenly truths. The ultimate of all was remiſſion of ſins through the merits of Chriſt, and everlaſting happineſs by faith in his name.

Of

Of the ſuperior Excellence, and Dignity of our Saviour.

As ſoon as our Saviour enters upon his miniſtry, he affords a pattern of the moſt conſummate virtue. In him we ſee the dignity of truth; the perfection of human nature. Nor could we expect leſs from the immaculate Son of the Father: *the Lamb without ſpot or blemiſh.* It was with true confidence, that he demanded of his cruel adverſaries——*Which of you convinceth me of ſin?* For as the Apoſtle bears witneſs, he *did no ſin, neither was guile found in his mouth. Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again: when he ſuffered, he threatened not: but committed himſelf to him, who judgeth righteouſly.* 1 Pet. ii. 22. His doctrine was not only calculated for future bliſs in the world to come, but alſo for happineſs here: for were it duly obſerved, it would make an heaven upon earth, and transform men to angels. Plato ſomewhere remarks, if virtue were to appear in a human form, how it would raiſe our admiration, and conciliate our eſteem. Had he lived in

the time of our Saviour, he might have ſeen the beauty of holineſs, and virtue veiled in mortality, and affording thoſe pleaſing emotions, which he had in theory conceived. It was ſaid by the prophet, that *he was to have no form, nor comelineſs:* and we may from hence preſume, that there was not in his compoſition, what is eſteemed worldly beauty. But there was grace and dignity in his words, as well as in his deportment, and a wonderful energy in his countenance, which nothing, but his bitter enemies, could withſtand. This is manifeſt from the uncommon reverence paid to him, and from the multitudes, which followed him day after day: who purſued him to his ſecret retirements; and could never be ſufficiently ſatisfied with his words and doctrine. But even his enemies ſometimes experienced the ſame influence: and were captivated with his gracious appearance and manner of ſpeaking. When the chief prieſts ſent their emiſſaries to ſeize him; they had not power to execute their commiſſion. And when upon their return, the officers were interrogated, *why they had*

not

not brought him: the anſwer was—*Never man ſpake, as he ſpake.* Luke vii. 46. Upon the fatal night in which he was betrayed, when the armed multitude came up to him in the garden, he advanced towards them with all that compoſure, which innocence inſpires, and aſked them, who it was, they ſought? *They anſwered, Jeſus of Nazareth. Jeſus ſaith unto them, I am he. As ſoon as he had ſaid unto them, I am he, they retired, and *ſat down, (or reclined themſelves,)* upon the ground. Such was the ſuperiority of his virtue and innocence, that it awed an armed multitude. He then went towards them, and *aſked them again, Whom ſeek ye? and they ſaid, Jeſus of Nazareth. Jeſus anſwered, I have told you, that I am he. If therefore ye ſeek me, let theſe* (my diſciples) *go their way:* John xviii. 4, 5, 6. ſhewing by theſe words his great concern in this time of danger, and love, for his friends. Even ſtill they ſeem to have been ſo awed by his ſuperior dignity, and goodneſs, that it is probable, they would have gone off

* Not fell down, as we tranſlate it.

without

without executing their purpoſe. But one of his followers, with a miſtaken zeal, drew his ſword, and wounded a ſervant of the high-prieſt. This produced a commotion, and they then laid hold of Jeſus, and led him away.

He forgave ſins, and knew the thoughts of the heart: and was often grieved with the perverſeneſs and inſenſibility, which he perceived lurking within. This hardneſs of heart, and the cruel deſigns of his adverſaries, gave him frequent opportunities of ſhewing his patience, long-ſuffering, and conſummate fortitude; which nothing could ſhake. His behaviour was always noble and ingenuous. When the Jews aſſailed him with inſnaring queſtions, he does not dwell upon their treachery, and ungrateful returns; nor upbraid them with their inſidious deſigns: but comes to the point directly, making truth his great and immediate object. This he urges home, and it comes always with ſuch weight, as to overpower his adverſaries; who generally turn their backs, convinced, and at the ſame time confounded, with the wiſdom of his anſwers.

ſwers. Above all things his compaſſion was manifeſted: which he ſhewed in a moſt affecting manner towards his miſtaken friends, and extended it to his moſt obdurate enemies. What can be more aggravating, than for a perſon to have his grand ſcheme continually miſapprehended, his beſt deſigns thwarted; and every mark of divine interpoſition attributed to the powers of darkneſs? At the ſame time, with all his charity and benevolence, to be himſelf ſtiled a Samaritan, and a devil? Theſe were repeated inſults and cruel returns: yet his good-will and compaſſion were ſtill uppermoſt: and his fortitude prevalent to the laſt. But it was never ſo nobly exerted, as when he was brought before the Sanhedrim, or great council of the nation, and had the high-prieſts, and all the people, conſpiring his ruin. Such was the innocence of his life, that his adverſaries could not produce a ſingle article, that could tend to convict him. Our Saviour ſtood mute, and reſigned: and there was no way left to gain evidence, but from his own words. The high-prieſt accordingly applied to him,

but

but could obtain no return. At laſt he adjured him *by the living God* to declare, whether he acknowledged himſelf to *be the Son of God.* This was a dangerous and inſnaring queſtion: it brought him to a cruel alternative; and his life depended upon the anſwer. But what was life to Jeſus, the Lord of life: who *came into the world to bear witneſs of the truth?* He with proper dignity aſſerted, that *he was the Son of God:* and that he ſhould one day judge the world. They then induced Pilate to aſk him, if he were *the King of the Jews.* He with the ſame compoſure anſwered, that he was: though *his kingdom* was *not of this world.* Upon theſe two articles they proceeded to procure his condemnation: of which the one they eſteemed blaſphemy; and the other treaſon. And though the Roman governor declared openly, that he found *nothing in him worthy of death,* nor * *any fault at all:* yet they obſtinately inſiſted upon his being crucified. In conſequence of this he was led away, and conſigned to a moſt

* John xviii. 38.

cruel,

cruel, and ignominious death. And, having been for a while ſuſpended in great agony between two thieves, he at length gave up the ghoſt, with his laſt breath interceding for his murderers. *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* So amiable, and ſo faultleſs, a character, was never to be found among the ſons of men: its ſuperiority proves it to have been of divine original.

Concerning the internal Evidence, with which the Sacred Writings are accompanied.

In this manner I have attempted to ſhew the excellence of the Chriſtian ſyſtem; and the accumulated evidence, with which it is attended. No hiſtories have been tranſmitted with ſuch inconteſtable marks of truth, as the Evangelical writings. There is nothing in them ſuperficial, and unneceſſary. On the contrary, they are fraught with intelligence, and matter of great moment: and abound *with wiſdom, which maketh wiſe to ſalvation.* They are artleſs in their compoſition, and conciſe: yet are attended with a degree of conviction, ſuch as

no

no art can afford. It was the Ariſtotelian opinion, that the rudeſt block of marble contains in it a latent ſtatue: and within that other figures, which want only a little art and induſtry to bring them forth to day. Analogous to this notion the ſacred writings abound with hidden truths, enveloped in the ſame matter, which due care and attention will readily diſcloſe. They may be looked upon as containing the richeſt mine, that ever exiſted: a mine abounding with precious ore, which no labour can exhauſt. They are written with the utmoſt impartiality; the great purpoſe of the writers being only to tranſmit a true character of their maſter, and an account of his goſpel. In reſpect to themſelves all their faults and failings are acknowledged: their backwardneſs, their miſconceptions, and blindneſs, marked: and above all, their apoſtacy, and deſertion, at that critical ſeaſon, when our Saviour overlooked his own danger, and conſulted only for their ſafety. The treſpaſs of St. Peter, when he denied his maſter, is recorded by every evangeliſt at large: and his violence in the garden is

alſo mentioned by all; and adjudged to him by St. John. In ſhort, the ſpirit of truth breathes in every line of this ſacred hiſtory: and every line affords matter of edification to the ſincere and intelligent inquirer. The reaſon, why there are ſo many Deiſts in the world, ariſes either from their total ignorance of theſe writings, or an imperfect knowledge, which is more fatal than ignorance. For the perſon not at all acquainted can ſay nothing: but the half-read and ſuperficial abounds with cavil, and miſrepreſentation. But whoever is a friend to virtue and truth, and zealous for divine knowledge, will find ample ſtore in this ſacred repoſitory. Nobody with ſincerity of heart can read the Scriptures; but by the bleſſing of God he muſt be a believer.

IV.

GENTILE AUTHORITY.

Of the Teſtimony of Gentile Writers in favour of Chriſtianity: and firſt of that great Enemy, the Emperor Julian.

I Have mentioned the many evidences in favour of the goſpel afforded by writers of the apoſtolic age, and by thoſe, who, in great numbers and from all parts of the world, immediately ſucceeded. By theſe the authenticity of the ſacred volumes, and the times when they were written, have been moſt ſatisfactorily aſcertained. As the like evidences may be alſo obtained from the moſt inveterate enemies of the goſpel, we from hence may gain another proof to the ſame purpoſe. For this good has providentially ariſen from evil, that

thoſe, who like Celſus, Pliny, Porphyry, and Julian, traduce both Chriſtians, and Chriſtianity, afford ſtrong evidence in their favour. This is effected both by their quotations, and their comments: and by the character, which they are obliged to give of thoſe, whom they ſtrive to abuſe. For they neither could deny the ſacred hiſtories, nor the miracles, which they deſcribe. Of this we have a remarkable inſtance in the invective of the Emperor Julian. * *Jeſus*, ſays he, *who made a few proſelytes from the dregs of the people, has not been known by name much above three hundred years: and during his whole life did nothing worthy of being recorded: unleſs the curing of ſome halt and blind people; and exorciſing ſome demoniacs, at the villages of Bethſaida, and Bethany, may be ranked among actions of conſequence.* This is by no means fairly repreſented; but it is ſufficient, that he allows the wonderful facts: and ſhews, that the worſt enemies of Chriſt, and his goſpel, could not deny theſe

* Jul. part ii. p. 191.

truths.

truths. Of the number, and greatneſs of the operations we are full as good judges, as he was.

He mentions the * evangeliſts by name, and quotes many paſſages from them: as well as from the prophets. Among others he treats of the firſt † chapter of St. John; and of Chriſt being the Word of God, and of the Word being made fleſh, and the acceptation in which it was at that time underſtood. This is repeated ſoon after; when he upbraids the Chriſtians, with too much truth, for worſhipping at the tombs of perſons departed: a cuſtom, which at that time had taken place. *If*, ſays he, ‡ *Chriſt told you, that ſepulchres were full of uncleanneſs: why do you chooſe thoſe places to offer up your prayers to God?* He ſhews great inveteracy to our Saviour, as may be ſeen in his epiſtles to the Alexandrians. § *They who nurſed your city like a tender legitimate daughter, did not bring it to its preſent amplitude by the preaching of Jeſus: nor did they produce that polity, un-*

* Jul. part. ii. p. 327.
† Ibid. p. 333.
‡ L. x. p. 335.
§ Epiſt. li. p. 433.

der which it is happily directed, by the doctrines of the execrable Galileans. Under this name he continually ſpeaks of the Chriſtians. And having thus ſet aſide Chriſt, he treats of the Sun, as the great and beneficent deity, and of the Moon, by which all things were produced:—and then ſays—* *Neither of theſe have ye the confidence to worſhip. But this Jeſus, whom neither ye, nor your fathers, ever ſaw, you maintain to be God, and the Logos,* or Word. After having mentioned the Jews, or Hebrews, he tells the Chriſtians, that they never imitated them in holineſs of life: † *But what you copy from them is their fury and bitterneſs in overturning temples, and altars. And you murder, not only thoſe of our perſuaſion, who follow the religion of their forefathers; but thoſe alſo, who like yourſelves have wandered from the truth: and whom ye eſteem hereticks, becauſe they do not offer the ſame dirges to the ‡ dead. But theſe are your own devices. For neither Jeſus, nor Paul, gave you any commiſſion to act in this manner.* It

* Epiſt. li. p. 434. † Part ii. p. 206. ‡ Or, *to the dead perſon.*

is

is certain that an evil ſpirit began to operate among Chriſtians in thoſe days: and in ſome places there had been outrages committed, which it would be in vain to palliate. But Julian, though no friend, yet diſtinguiſhes between the law and the abuſe of the law: and undeſignedly bears a true teſtimony to Chriſt and his Apoſtle.

He ſpeaks however of the Chriſtians as perſons in general of * holy life: and deſires his people to copy after them. He mentions their † charity: by which he ſays ſolely they had ſupported *their baſe ſyſtem*. In his letter to ‡ Arſacius he begs, that their example may be followed. *Why muſt we reſt in what has been done, and not proceed to thoſe advantages, by which that baſe religion* (of the Galileans) *has been promoted? I mean their charity, and benevolence to ſtrangers; their care about the funerals of their friends; and the appearance of ſanctity, that they put on: all which we ought duly to obſerve. It is quite ſhameful, when we do not ſee a ſingle Jew begging, and when thoſe deteſtable*

* Epiſt. xlii. p. 423. † Fragment, part i. p. 305. 363.

‡ Epiſt. xlix. p. 429, 430.

 Galileans,

Galileans, not only take care of their own brethren, but extend their charity to thoſe of our perſuaſion; that our own people ſhould want that aſſiſtance from us, to which they have a claim. In his epiſtle to * Theodorus he takes notice of their faith, and inflexible fortitude: and ſays, that thoſe, *who were proficients in this ſchool of iniquity, ſhewed ſuch zeal, that they were ready to die for the cauſe in which they were engaged:* and that they would undergo the extremes of poverty and hunger, rather than partake of any forbidden food. Notwithſtanding his repeated abuſes of their worſhip; he allows them ſome farther merit, as we find in the ſame epiſtle.—† *After all, theſe* (Galileans) *have in ſome degree a proper ſenſe of religion: for they worſhip no abject and vulgar Deity; but that God, who is truly all-powerful, and all-good, by whoſe direction the ſenſible world is*

* Epiſt. lxiii. p. 453.

† The paſſage is defective—Αλλ' ὑτοι εν μερει θεοσεβεις οντες, επειπερ ὸν τιμωσιν—αλλ' αληθως οντα δυνατωτατον, και αγαθωτατον κτλ—which may be ſupplied in the following manner:—Αλλ' ὁυτοι εν μερει θεοσεβεις (φαινονται) οντες. Επειπερ θεον τιμωσιν (ου φαυλον) αλλ' αληθως οντα δυνατωτατον και αγαθωτατον.—In this manner I ſhall take the liberty to tranſlate it.

conducted:

conducted: the ſame, I am perſuaded, that we alſo worſhip under different names. They therefore ſeem to me to act very conſiſtently, as they are not tranſgreſſors of the laws; but only err in paying their worſhip to this one God to the neglect of all the reſt: and in thinking, that we only, whom they ſtile the Gentiles, are precluded from his influence *, *&c.* Thus we find, that truth, will ſometimes, like lightning from a dark cloud, force its way: and notwithſtanding the prejudices, and inveteracy, of this unhappy apoſtate, he affords ſtrong evidence in favour both of the goſpel and its votaries. We have ſeen above that he mentions the Evangeliſts and St. Paul by name, and quotes from their writings, and from the writings of the prophets; and affords us his opinion of their being undoubtedly genuine. He recommends the Chriſtians, for their decent appearance, as examples to his own prieſts and people: and acknowledges that they were obedient to the laws, worſhippers of God the creator of all things, and only deficient in not paying adoration to the two

* The latter part is defective.

luminaries,

luminaries, and to the other Deities of the Gentile world: making that a failing, which was a virtue. Laſtly, he mentions their faith and fortitude, in maintaining the religion of Chriſt: which no pains, nor penalties, could make them renounce,

Atteſtation of Celſus, from Origen.—
Edit. Cantab.

Celſus was an Epicurean philoſopher, and prior to Julian by two centuries. He flouriſhed in the reign of Adrian, and wrote a ſevere book againſt chriſtianity, which book he ſtiled *The Word of Truth.* As he lived ſo early, he had probably ſeen ſome of the later diſciples of the apoſtles; eſpecially thoſe, who had been converſant with St. John. From the various articles, which he oppoſes, we may learn for certain, what was admitted as goſpel in his time. We have therefore thus far evidence in favour of the ſacred writings. For many of the principal paſſages in the Evangeliſts and Apoſtles, as well as in the Old Teſtament, are either quoted, or alluded to, by him.

He

He ſpeaks of [1] Moſes, and the creation; and refers often to the prophets. He ſpeaks alſo of [2] Chriſt, and his incarnation; and of his being born of a [3] virgin: and mentions his flight into [4] Egypt. He acknowledges, that his diſciples looked upon him as a divine [5] perſonage, and accordingly [6] worſhipped him, as the [7] Son of God. He alludes frequently to the Holy [8] Spirit; and mentions God under the title of the [9] Moſt High: and ſpeaks collectively of the [10] Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, as tranſmitted by the evangeliſts. He does not deny the miracles of Chriſt, nor of his apoſtles; but attributes them to [11] magick. Laſtly, the

1 Of the creation of the world. Origen. L. vi. p. 311, 317.
2 Birth of Chriſt. Ibid. L. i. p. 22—30. 32.
3 Born of a virgin. L. i. p. 30.
4 Flight into Egypt. L. i. p. 30.
5 Chriſt's divinity. L. vi. p. 325. 327. L. viii. p. 388.
6 His worſhip. L. viii. p. 385. 387, 388.
7 Chriſt the Son of God. L. vi. p. 303. L. viii. p. 385, 386, 387.
8 Of the Holy Spirit. L. vi. p. 323. 325. L. vii. p. 363.
9 The Moſt High God. L. viii. p. 423.
10 Of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt. L. vii. p. 337.
11 Chriſt's miracles attributed to magick. L. i. p. 7. 30. and p. 34. 55. L. ii. p. 92, 93.

[12] crucifixion of our Saviour, his [13] death, [14] reſurrection, and his [15] appearing to his diſciples afterwards, together with the [16] darkneſs, and earthquake, at his deceaſe, are mentioned by him. Many other articles of conſequence occur in the courſe of his work. It is true, he continually objects, and diſbelieves. But thoſe very objections prove, that theſe hiſtories, and doctrines, exiſted: and muſt neceſſarily have been antecedent to his cavils, which is all that we want to know from him. Thus he has throughout the whole of his work contributed indirectly towards the eſtabliſhment of the truth, and the canon of ſcripture. And as I have before ſaid, we muſt give up all hiſtory, if we ſet aſide ſuch evidence.

12 His crucifixion. L. ii. p. 102.

13 His death. L. vii. p. 355.

14 His reſurrection. L. ii. p. 93, 94. L. vii. p. 352, 353.

15 His appearance afterwards. L. ii. p. 95, 96. 98. 100, 101. L. vii. p. 355.

16 Of the darkneſs and earthquake at the crucifixion, L. ii. p. 94.

Of Porphyry's Atteſtation.

The like evidence may be obtained from Porphyry, who was as great an enemy to chriſtianity as Celſus, or Julian. Yet he ſeems in ſome degree to have acted againſt conviction, as Euſebius very juſtly intimates. For he allowed the ſuperiority of Chriſt over the Demons, which he worſhipped. * *How little* (ſays that author) *the power and influence of theſe evil ſpirits has prevailed, ever ſince our Saviour made his tranſitory abode among men, may be known from the treatiſe of that great advocate for demon-worſhip Porphyry, which he wrote againſt us Chriſtians; where he ſpeaks in the following manner.—And now they wonder, that a ſickneſs has prevailed in this City ſo many years, when Æſculapius, and ſo many other Gods, no longer reſide here. For ſince Jeſus has been reverenced within theſe precincts, we have never experienced any the leaſt aſſiſtance from the other deities.* If Rome was the city, to which he alludes, it was

* Præp. Evangel. L. v. p. 181. C. and D.

the

the head quarters of Paganiſm. It is therefore wonderful, if theſe gods had ever exiſted, that they ſhould thus forſake their votaries, unleſs they yielded to a ſuperior power. This is intimated by Porphyry, though he is not willing to own it: and Euſebius in conſequence of it ſays very truly, *If he confeſſes, that ſince the introduction of Jeſus and his worſhip, no publick advantage has ever accrued from Æſculapius, and the other deities, why does he ſtill retain any regard for theſe deities and heroes?* For he allows, that they fled at the name of Jeſus, and deſerted their beſt friends. In him likewiſe are to be found references to many important parts of ſcripture.

Evidence from Pliny.

Pliny the younger was born in the firſt century, and within leſs than thirty years after the death of our Saviour. And he has tranſmitted a particular account of the conſtancy of the firſt Chriſtians, and the cruel trials, which they were obliged to undergo. Theſe trials were brought upon many of them by Pliny himſelf, who in the

the beginning of the ſecond century had been by the Emperor Trajan made preſident of Bithynia. He confeſſes, that he found in them no appearance of guilt: on the contrary he intimates, that their religion was founded in morality; and their only miſtake was (as he preſumed it to be) their worſhipping of Chriſt. Upon this account he put ſo many to death, that he was weary of executions, and wrote to Trajan to know, how he ſhould for the future proceed. His doubts upon this occaſion are very extraordinary; and ſuch, as one would have imagined, could never have been entertained by a man of learning and a philoſopher, or any rational being.

* *I have been*, ſays he, *under no ſmall degree of uncertainty, whether I ſhould make any difference in reſpect to their time of life: or whether thoſe of tender age, and thoſe in a ſtate of maturity, ſhould be eſteemed alike obnoxious. Alſo, whether any indulgence ſhould be made towards thoſe, who may repent of their error: or whether the having been a*

* Epiſt. 91.

Chriſtian

Chriſtian ſhould make repentance void. Laſtly, whether the very name of Chriſtian without any guilt ſhould be ſufficient for condemnation: or whether it were neceſſary for ſome crime to be annexed to the name to warrant me to proceed ſo far. Who would think, that a perſon of common ſenſe, and at all tinctured with humanity, and who had the leaſt idea of truth and juſtice, ſhould want information in ſo plain a caſe? And if he did want it, that he ſhould have blindly gone on without aſking this ſalutary advice, till he was tired with puniſhment, and had conſigned ſuch numbers to death? *As yet*, ſays he, *my courſe of proceeding in reſpect to thoſe, who are brought before me as Chriſtians, has been in the following manner. I have aſked them firſt, if they were of that ſect. If they anſwered in the affirmative, I put the ſame queſtion to them again twice, and threatened them with the puniſhment, which would be the conſequence of their perſiſting. If they were ſtill obſtinate, I ordered them to be led away.* This leading away was not merely to death, but often to be worried by wild beaſts in the circus: at other times to the moſt

moſt horrid torments. * Athenagoras in his elegant addreſs to the two reigning Emperors ſhews, that this unjuſt proceſs prevailed in other places. All other people, ſays this excellent writer, enjoy under your government their particular mode of worſhip unmoleſted. And to every perſon, who is accuſed, there is a fair opportunity granted for his clearing himſelf: but the very name of Chriſtian is ſufficient for † condemnation. Tertullian and other authors mention, that as ſoon as the word Chriſtian was pronounced before the judge, the cry was—*to the beaſts*:—*to the lions*: and the ſuppoſed criminal was accordingly expoſed and torn to pieces. Pliny proceeds to give a reaſon for his acting in this manner—*For I made no ſcruple to determine, that, whatever their confeſſion might turn out, their ſtubbornneſs and inflexible obſtinacy ought to be puniſhed.* We find here, that one queſtion was put to them three times with a menace: but neither inſtruction, nor per-

* Apology, p. 279, 280.

† Juſtin Martyr, in his apology, ſpeaks to the ſame purpoſe, p. 46. § 5.

 ſuaſion,

ſuaſion, adminiſtered. Yet he pronounces them obſtinate: though all their crime was the remaining in a ſyſtem, in which nothing of any evil tendency was pretended to be diſcovered. Beſides he did not conſider, that what in a bad cauſe we eſteem * obſtinacy, in a good cauſe is fortitude and praiſe-worthy. But he never ſearched into the cauſe to know whether it was bad or good.

He afterwards mentions ſome, who were Roman citizens, and under the ſame infatuation, as he terms it, and were accordingly diſpatched to Rome. There were others, who through fear had been brought to ſacrifice their faith, in which ſome of them had before perſevered for twenty years: but declared that they had renounced it, and were not Chriſtians. *All theſe*, ſays Pliny to the Emperor, *paid adoration to your image and to the ſtatutes of the gods. They likewiſe † blaſphemed Chriſt. Theſe (upon examination) affirmed, that this*

* The Emperor Antoninus imputes the rational fortitude of the Chriſtians to obſtinacy.

† Maledixerunt.

was

was the whole of their fault, or miſtake: They uſed, upon a particular ſtated day (Sunday) *to aſſemble* (ante lucem) *before it was light; and all joined in a hymn to Chriſt as a God. And they bound themſelves by an oath, not for a ſanction to any vice, but on the contrary, to preſerve themſelves guiltleſs of all robbery, and adultery: likewiſe that they would never break their word; nor refuſe, when called upon, to return any pledge, which had been entruſted to their hands. When this was compleated, they uſed to retire: and ſome time afterwards to come again and take bread, which they received* (men and women) *promiſcuouſly, and in the moſt innocent manner. This rite however they had left off, ever ſince an edict of mine was publiſhed; by which in conſequence of your mandate I had forbidden all ſuch meetings.* By the confeſſion of theſe perſons, who had been forced to abandon the cauſe, it appeared, that the whole proceſs of the Chriſtians in theſe parts was not merely blameleſs, but praiſe-worthy. And though they were not conſcious of the leaſt harm, but on the contrary ſtrove to promote every private, and public virtue,

yet they aroſe before day-break to perform their duty to God; that their worſhip, however innocent, and laudable, might not give offence. And as there was ſo much ſaid in their favour, and not one word to their prejudice, we might juſtly expect, that if they did not meet with encouragement, they at leaſt obtained indemnity, in conſequence of their obedience, and virtuous behaviour. Not in the leaſt, as we may learn from Pliny's words. *I was from hence more and more induced to make farther trial, and this by torture; which was performed upon two maids, who are ſtiled miniſters: but I could diſcover nothing more, than a baſe and extravagant ſuperſtition.* Good Heavens! who could think, that a perſon of ſuch an excellent character, as Pliny, ſhould be ſo loſt to all juſtice and humanity? He calls the religion of this perſecuted people extravagant and baſe: though he had been informed by indiſputable evidence, that it contained nothing, that was wild or irregular: on the contrary it was ſhewn to be a mild, rational, and benevolent ſyſtem, productive of much good, and

attended

attended with no evil. In his examination of the two unfortunate women, who were deaconeſſes, and aſſiſted at their private aſſemblies, he ſhews a more than ordinary cruel purpoſe, in chooſing perſons, who from their natural delicacy of frame, and mildneſs of diſpoſition, were moſt likely to yield to the tortures, to which they were to be expoſed. In conſequence of this he thought that he ſhould force from them much ſooner than from men, whatever he wanted them to own. Whether they died under theſe torments, or were put to death afterwards, is not ſaid. It is certain, that nothing but the truth could be extorted from them; and that they ſhewed invincible fortitude, which was miſinterpreted contumacy, and pronounced, as we have before ſeen, a crime worthy of death. And we may from hence preſume, that death was their portion.

Pliny being at laſt tired with theſe repeated inſtances of ſeverity tells the Emperor, that he ſhould proceed no farther till he had his direction, upon account of the numbers, whoſe lives would be en-

 dangered,

dangered. *For many of all ages, and of both ſexes, are brought into jeopardy: and the number will continually encreaſe. Nor is it only over cities, that this peſtilential ſuperſtition has diffuſed itſelf; but through the villages all over the country: yet the progreſs may be ſtopped, and the evil corrected. This is certain: the temples, which were almoſt deſolated, begin to be frequented, and the ſacred rites after a long omiſſion are renewed: the carcaſes alſo of the victims, which could hardly find a purchaſer, are now ſold at large. From hence we may eaſily conceive, how great a number of people may be reformed, if there be room given for repentance.* We ſee, that hitherto the very name of Chriſtian was ſufficient for condemnation, without inquiry made, or defence admitted. And Trajan, as we find by his anſwer, did little towards remedying the evil. He only directs Pliny, not to have them ſearched after: *but, if any*, ſays the Emperor, *.be accuſed, and proved to be Chriſtians, let them be puniſhed accordingly*; and, as it is intimated, without any farther inquiry. This puniſhment was uniformly death, but in various and horrid

ſhapes,

ſhapes, as we learn from the hiſtories of thoſe excellent perſons, who were made victims.

The Account given by Tacitus.

It would take up a volume to collect all the accounts, tranſmitted by different writers, of the cruelties exerciſed upon thoſe holy martyrs by their infernal perſecutors. I ſhall therefore confine myſelf to the evidence of Tacitus, a Gentile hiſtorian, who deſcribes that very early * perſecution, which commenced in the reign of † Nero: but with the ſame prejudices, as thoſe perſons, of whom we have ſpoken before. This Emperor had been accuſed of having wantonly ſet fire to Rome. *To free himſelf therefore from this imputation, he laid the guilt upon others, and accordingly made them ſuffer the moſt exquiſite torments. Theſe were a ſet of people ſufficiently odious for their flagitiouſneſs, and commonly called Chriſtians. The perſon, from whom they received this*

* Annals, Book xv. c. 44. p. 1066. Var.

† In this perſecution St. Peter and St. Paul ſuffered.

 name,

name, was Chriſtus, who in the reign of Tiberius ſuffered death under his procurator Pontius Pilate. This pernicious ſuperſtition, which (commenced in him and) *was ſmothered for a time, burſt forth again, not only over all Judea, where the evil originated, but as far as Rome, whither all things atrocious and infamous flow in, as to a center, and are practiſed openly. At firſt only thoſe were ſeized, who confeſſed themſelves Chriſtians: afterwards others, whom they diſcovered, to a vaſt amount; and who were condemned, not ſo much for ſetting fire to the city, as for their uniform hatred of all mankind.* I muſt ſtop here to obſerve, that the hiſtorian, like many other writers, blends two ſets of people together, the Chriſtians, and the Jews: of whom the latter probably bore ſome ſhare in this perſecution, and ſuffered with the former. To theſe was imputed that unſociable ſpirit, and hatred of mankind, mentioned above. Of the Chriſtian charity, and philanthropy, their worſt enemy Julian bore witneſs. With them—*love was the fulfilling of the law*; which love was extended to all mankind.

The

The hiſtorian proceeds to inform us of the cruelties and contempt, which theſe glorious martyrs were doomed to undergo. It was ſo contrived, he ſays, that in their ſufferings they ſhould be expoſed to ſcorn, and their miſery rendered ridiculous. *For this purpoſe they were incloſed in the ſkins of wild beaſts, that they might be torn to pieces by dogs: or elſe they were faſtened to croſſes. Others were appointed to be* (by ſome diabolical art) *ſet on fire: and it was ſo ordered, that they ſhould* (in this inflamed ſtate) *after they had been in torment all day, ſerve for lights* (in the ſtreets) *by* * *night. Nero had made an offer of his gardens for the exhibition of theſe ſpectacles: and he appointed a mock Circenſian feſtivity for their farther celebration. Here he mixed with the mob in the habit of a charioteer: or elſe viewed theſe ſpectacles from his car. This behaviour pro-*

* I imagine, from a paſſage in Juvenal, that they had deep holes made in different parts of the body, in which wax tapers were inſerted. In this manner they were expoſed by day and by night in the ſtreets: and when theſe tapers burned down to the quick, the pain in conſequence of it muſt have been very great, and the ſpectacle, which the poor ſufferers exhibited, muſt have been horrid.

duced

duced ſome commiſeration towards the ſuffer-ers, however guilty they might be, and de-ſerving whatever could be inflicted: for it appeared, that they were not ſacrificed out of regard to public utility; but merely to gratify the cruelty of one perſon. Here we have again condemnation without proof, and guilt imputed without any crime alledged. For as to ſetting fire to the city, the author acquits the Chriſtians; and proceeds only upon that vague and miſtaken notion of their being enemies to mankind.

But there were other * modes of puniſh-ment and execution among the Romans, and the ſubordinate nations, to which the Chriſtians were in all places liable. Such was the Uncus, or hook; the Eculeus, the Palus and Stipes, upon which they ſeem to have been impaled: a mode of torment too ſhocking to be deſcribed. Alſo the iron chair with grates beneath, upon which, when heated, the poor victims were placed. But the moſt common, and favourite pu-niſhment to the ſpectators was their being

* See Seneca's Conſolatio ad Marciam, vol. i. p. 284.

expoſed

expoſed to wild * beaſts in the Circus: as this afforded a greater variety of cruel ſatisfaction. In this manner numbers were put to death; not only at Rome, but in many of the chief cities both in the eaſt and in the weſt, at a great diſtance from the capital. The very edicts of ſome Emperors to this purpoſe are ſtill extant, and others are recorded, though loſt.

Farther Account of the more early Perſecutions.

Many excellent perſons laid down their lives for the ſake of the goſpel during theſe perilous times. In the perſecution under Trajan, † Ignatius biſhop of Antioch, a man of ſingular piety, who had been converſant with the apoſtles, was ſent for from Syria to Rome, where he was expoſed to wild beaſts, and torn to pieces. The venerable Polycarp was biſhop of Smyrna, and in like manner ſuffered martyrdom. When he was brought before the ‡ pro-

* Euſeb. Eccleſiaſt. Hiſt. L. v. p. 206, 208, &c.
† Ibid. L. iii. C. 36. p. 130.
‡ Ibid. L. iv. C. 14. p. 160.

conſul,

conſul, he was deſired to renounce Chriſt. But he anſwered, that he had ſerved him ſixty-eight years; and could never be brought to forſake his maſter. He had been a diſciple of St. John, and laboured much towards the advancement of Chriſtianity: till in the reign of Marcus Antoninus he was called forth, and condemned to be expoſed to wild beaſts. But it not being a proper day for thoſe horrid ſports, to prevent any delay, they burnt him alive. Juſtin Martyr was a perſon of great learning: and ſeems to have been the firſt who attempted to foil the Grecians at their own weapons; and to bring evidence from their writers to ſhew the vanity of their pretenſions either in reſpect to the excellence of their religion, or antiquity of their lawgivers. He was a proſelyte of * Samaria in Paleſtine, but of Grecian parentage; and among other places reſided in Rome, where he ſuffered martyrdom in the reign of Antoninus Philoſophus. At Lyons and at Vienne there had been a church founded

* Euſeb. Eccleſiaſt. Hiſt. L. iv. c. 16. p. 174. See alſo Irenæus, Tertullian, Jerome.

very

very early; and, as we may judge, either in the days of the apoſtles, or ſoon after. In the reign of the ſame Emperor Antoninus multitudes were ſought out by informers, and ſuffered here for their faith: and among the reſt * Pothinus, their venerable biſhop. At the age of ninety he underwent ſtripes, and other cruel uſage, under which he ſunk and died in priſon. † The cruelties here exerciſed were beyond deſcription ſhocking. In the perſecution under Trajan, Simeon biſhop of Jeruſalem, after having ſuffered many tortures, was at laſt ‡ put to death. He was the ſon of Cleopas, the brother of Joſeph; who by his marriage with the Virgin Mary became the reputed father of our Saviour. Hence, as § Simeon was eſteemed the relation of Chriſt, we may preſume, that he was one

* Euſebius, above, L. v. c. 1. p. 204, &c.

† See the curious letter of the churches of Vienne and Lyons to the churches of Aſia; in which an account is given of the perſecution, which had raged in Gaul; and the manifold and cruel ſufferings of the martyrs. Ibid. p. 198.

‡ Euſeb. L. iii. c. 32. p. 126.

§ Hegeſippus. Euſeb. L. iii. c. 11. p. 105. Irenæus above.

of

of his early diſciples. Nor did he ſhew himſelf unworthy of that alliance; for after the ſufferings mentioned above he was at laſt crucified in the hundred and twentieth year of his age.

Theſe were ſome of the principal perſons, who in different parts of the world laid down their lives for the goſpel of Chriſt: and with them multitudes of others in the ſame glorious manner gave atteſtation to the truth. Theſe perſecutions were univerſal, and very grievous: nor are there to be found in the annals of time any inſtances of ſuch bitterneſs and cruelty, as were exerciſed towards the Chriſtians. From theſe diſtant perſecutions we are certified of the progreſs of the goſpel, and of the regions, where it had taken place.

Though the ſufferings of the Chriſtians were great, yet their conſtancy was ſuperior. Nothing could equal their fortitude. Some of them in the firſt perſecution, and even in the ſecond, had probably been formerly witneſſes to the miracles of our Saviour. Great numbers had ſeen the apoſtles and been their diſciples: hence they

were

were undoubtedly well acquainted with the mighty works, which had been at times exhibited by thoſe holy perſons. The word of God alſo, which had been preached to them, came with great force from thoſe immediate delegates of Chriſt Jeſus; and conſequently ſunk deep in their hearts. Their faith therefore in conſequence of it was lively and operative; and their proſpects of a future life, and the happineſs hereafter, ſo vivid, and ſo aſſured, that they overlooked all things in this world, and were longing for the immortality promiſed in the next. Hence they braved all terrors; and when forced before rulers and judges, behaved with that dignity and compoſure, which became the ſervants of ſo great a maſter. In the midſt of the tortures, which they were made to undergo, the ſame fortitude remained: and nothing, but death, could extinguiſh their zeal for the goſpel, and love for their Saviour. But however lively their faith may have been, and however great thoſe advantages from their proximity to Chriſt and his apoſtles; yet their own zeal and reſolu-

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tion alone were not, I think, ſufficient to uphold them in thoſe cruel conflicts. They were certainly ſupported by the hand of Heaven: and from thence bleſſed with that fortitude, which no terrors could appall. For without the divine aſſiſtance it ſeems impoſſible for the powers of man to have ſufficed againſt thoſe numberleſs evils, to which they were expoſed. How cruel their ſufferings were, we have ſeen from the teſtimony of Pagan writers, ſuch as Tacitus, and Pliny; and they are alſo authenticated by the letter of Trajan. From theſe authors, as well as from a variety of Chriſtian writers, we find, not one or two inſtances only of perſons, who like Vanini, or Lizinſki, may have braved death; but of thouſands, who ſacrificed all that was dear in life, and ſubmitted to the moſt grievous tortures, which rendered death a bleſſing. It has been ſaid by ſome, that they too much courted danger; and expoſed themſelves unneceſſarily to theſe trials. I believe never unneceſſarily; for the times required particular exertion in every good man to ſet an example to others, and to

teach

teach them, that neither death, nor the terrors of death, ſhould have any effect upon the true ſervants of Chriſt. Their promptneſs ſhewed their zeal, and their faith: and the truth of that religion, upon which their faith was founded.

Mr. Dodwell thinks, that there were not ſo many put to death, as has been repreſented: and in proof of it he applies to the legation of Athenagoras. But the learned Benedictine, who publiſhed that work, calls him to a very * ſevere account for having either through careleſſneſs, or elſe wilfully, miſinterpreted that author. Mr. Dodwell was a perſon of too much honour to have erred deſignedly: and did not deſerve ſuch an imputation. He was however certainly miſtaken; for Athenagoras gives a very different account: and concludes with ſay-

* Dodwelli in hunc locum perabſurda obſervatio legitur. Diſſert. 11. Cypr. n. 38.—At Dodwellus oſcitanter hallucinatus eſt, ſi non animadvertit, quæ ſequuntur: vel probi viri non functus officio, ſi diſſimulaverit. Addit enim paulo poſt Athenagoras—*neque enim ad pecunias ſpectat inimicorum injuria; neque ad mulctam ignominia, &c.—ſed corporibus, ac vitæ noſtræ, poſtquam projecerimus pecunias, inſidiantur.* His adde illam precem—*Quo tandem aliquando mactari deſinamus?* Athenag. Legatio. p. 280. n. g.

ing, *When ſhall we ceaſe to be made victims?*

Advantages obtained from Pagan Writers.

There are many more Gentile authors of different times, to whom I might have applied, but I paſs them over for brevity's ſake. From theſe, whom I have mentioned, as well as from variety of others, much advantage is to be obtained. For the evidence, which they afford, coming from enemies, cannot be attended with any prejudices in favour of the goſpel, and muſt neceſſarily have great weight. By their frequent appeal to the Prophets and Evangeliſts they ſhew, that they entertained no doubt of the authenticity of the holy ſcriptures. They likewiſe diſcover, in what acceptation many controverted paſſages were admitted by ſome of the firſt Chriſtians. We are likewiſe informed by them of the charity, and exemplary lives of thoſe Chriſtians, and of their univerſal benevolence; alſo their numbers in different parts of the world. From hence we learn, how rapid the progreſs of Chriſtia-

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nity was in the firſt, and in the ſucceeding, century: and even in the days of the apoſtles. This could not have been effected without the immediate furtherance of the Deity. Nothing but a miraculous interpoſition could, under ſuch difficulties, have given birth to the ſyſtem, or ſo rapidly promoted it. Theſe writers afford alſo indiſputable atteſtation to the ſevere conflicts, which the firſt Chriſtians experienced; and under which they muſt have ſunk, if they had not been divinely ſupported. Their faith and conſtancy was never before, nor ſince, equalled. Of this, as I have obſerved, we have not one or two examples tranſmitted, nor from one city or province: but multitudes from all parts of the Roman empire bore witneſs to the truth, and ſigned it with their blood. They took up their croſs originally with a proſpect of much worldly evil; and with a reſolution to ſuffer all things rather than deny their Saviour. They were accordingly called forth, and ſtood their trial; glorioufly laying down their lives for the ſake of the goſpel. But firſt they experienced poverty, ſhame, re-

 proach,

proach, bondage, ſtripes; and laſtly, mutilation, racks, the rending and tearing of wild beaſts, and other the ſevereſt tortures, that human malice could invent. Theſe evidences come from the enemies of the goſpel: and their authority was never called in queſtion.

Falſe Accuſation—concerning the Chriſtians having deſtroyed the Writings of their Adverſaries.

It has been imagined, and maintained, by ſome writers, that the Chriſtians formerly, out of fear and jealouſy, deſtroyed the works of their adverſaries. If they did, they acted very unwiſely: for they deprived Chriſtianity of much evidence in its favour. The worſt enemies of the goſpel have ſubſcribed more or leſs to its truth. This has been ſhewn in the accounts afforded above by Pliny, Tacitus, and Julian: and there are other Gentile writers, of whom we have ample remains, and who afford good evidence to my aſſertion. But the allegation is by no means true: nor was it in the power of the Chriſtians to annihilate

annihilate ſo many writings of their adverſaries. This is manifeſt from an attempt once made to this purpoſe. For in the beginning of the fourth century an edict came out from Conſtantine, by which Porphyry's work againſt Chriſtianity was ordered to be burnt. And burnt undoubtedly it was: but not all the copies, for that was impoſſible. Hence we find that it was anſwered, and quoted by Apollinarius, and Jerome, who both lived afterwards: and a ſecond edict for its ſuppreſſion was ſent forth as late as the reign of the younger Theodoſius. Thus it ſtill ſurvived: till at laſt people grew weary, and, as * Chryſoſtome ſays, the work became contemptible, and on this account was neglected, and loſt. If we have no longer many of the writings of the Gentile polemicks, we are equally deprived of thoſe of the Chriſtians to a greater amount. They periſhed alike in the wreck of time. And if the Chriſtians had ſo little care for their friends, it could not be expected, that they ſhould ſhew more regard for their

* D. S. Bab. Orat. 2. tom. ii. p. 539. Benedict.

enemies. However the writings of many Gentile philoſophers, who were enemies to Chriſtianity, have been more or leſs tranſmitted. Such are thoſe of Maximus Tyrius, Marcus Antoninus Philoſophus, Celſus, Plotinus, Porphyry, Philoſtratus, Julian, Libanius, Hierocles, Jamblichus, Eunapius, Proclus. Theſe collectively would amount to many volumes; and were all preſerved by Chriſtians.

Of the great Injuſtice and Inhumanity both of Pliny, and Trajan, farther conſidered.

A very worthy perſon, and an elegant * writer, has mentioned, that, *if we impartially examine the preſent inſtance of the perſecution of the Chriſtians, we ſhall find it to have been grounded on the ancient conſtitution of the ſtate; and not to have proceeded from an arbitrary and intolerant ſpirit in Trajan.* And he ſays, that *Livy mentions it as an eſtabliſhed principle of the earlier ages of the commonwealth, to guard againſt the introduc-*

* Mr. Melmoth, in his tranſlation of Pliny's Epiſtles. See Vol. ii. Letter 99. p. 306, 7.

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tion of foreign ceremonies of religion. * *For nothing could be more prejudicial to the religion of a country, than a foreign mode of ſacrificing.* He adds—*Upon the whole then it appears evident, that theſe primitive Chriſtians, deeply impreſſed with the evidence of the holy religion, they profeſſed, nobly dared at all hazard to render themſelves obnoxious, not particularly indeed to Trajan, but to the ancient, and intolerant laws of the ſtate, by refuſing to join in communion with the eſtabliſhed worſhip; and by holding their meetings at a ſuſpicious hour of the night:* which by Pliny, from whom he copies, is ſtiled—ante lucem.

I am obliged to diſſent from this learned perſon almoſt in every article.

1. In the firſt place, it was impoſſible for *theſe perſecutions to have been grounded upon the ancient conſtitution of the Roman ſtate; or any mode of acting peculiar to that city.* For how could the police of Rome, and its ancient inſtitutes, affect people of Bithy-

* —— nihil æque diſſolvendæ religionis eſſe, quam cum non patrio, ſed externo, ritu ſacrificaretur. L. xxxix. c. 16. p. 578. Var.

nia, or of Pontus: of Syria, Egypt, or Gaul? They all worſhipped their particular deities: and the Romans never in any one inſtance interfered. The evidence from Livy is not in the leaſt to the purpoſe.

2. Theſe ancient Chriſtians, ſo far from *nobly daring at all hazard to render themſelves obnoxious*, did every thing in their power to prevent it. They met in ſecret, and performed their worſhip in their (ὑπερῳα) *higheſt rooms*, to avoid giving offence.

3. For this very reaſon they roſe, as Pliny tells us (ante lucem) *before day-light*: which is very improperly rendered—*a ſuſpicious hour of the night*: Thouſands muſt have ariſen to their occupations at the ſame ſeaſon (tempore antelucano) and have been blameleſs.

4. Their behaviour was undoubtedly *noble*: but they did not diſplay it by any wilful oppoſition to the law. They ſhewed it by patience, and reſignation, and an implicit obedience in all things, that could be legally and reaſonably demanded: and laſtly

laſtly by ſuffering death, rather than give up their religion, and deny their Saviour.

5. They were guilty of no breach of law in aſſembling together. For there was no law againſt them, when they were at firſt ſo cruelly uſed by Pliny, and Trajan. The particular prohibitions quoted related, as I have before ſaid, to the immediate police of ancient Rome, and not to Pontus or Bithynia.

6. Their innocence in this reſpect is farther apparent. For neither Pliny, nor Trajan, accuſed them of any crime againſt the ſtate, nor breach of any law, nor of any crime whatever. Not one word to this purpoſe is intimated: but quite the contrary. Had there been the leaſt grounds for complaint, we ſhould have had the allegation at large.

7. It was forbidden, according to Livy, to introduce any foreign ceremonies or ſacrifices. But the Chriſtians uſed no foreign ſacrifices, not even in Bithynia: nor did they ſacrifice at all. This ancient law could not in any degree affect them. All that is quoted to this purpoſe is incompetent.

8. Nor

8. Nor had they any ceremonies, of which they could juſtly be accuſed. They were *baptized,* or in other words, dipped in water: and they at ſtated times partook of *bread and wine:* and at other times *broke bread:* all which were circumſtances common to every Roman, and to people of every nation. What mental reverence they might entertain at ſuch ſeaſons was ſecret, and could not therefore be an object of notice; much leſs of any law or edict.

9. Nor were they accuſed of introducing any new gods. On the contrary they were from their ſpiritual mode of worſhip eſteemed in general atheiſts. Of this cruel imputation the fathers continually * complain.

10. When the author ſays, that the Chriſtians—*rendered themſelves obnoxious by refuſing to join in communion with the eſtabliſhed worſhip,* an unwary reader might be led to think, that the Romans had an uniform mode of worſhip; and a ritual, like thoſe in the different Chriſtian churches,

* Athenag. Legat. § iii. p. 282. Juſtin Martyr. Apolog. 1. § vi. p. 47.

to

to which people were obliged to ſubſcribe. But nothing of this ſort was to be found either among the Romans, or the Greeks. They had a multiplicity of deities: and people in general might ſerve * all, or any, or none. Whatever their choice might have been, no penalty, nor diſgrace, enſued. Many of the philoſophical ſects held their deities in the higheſt contempt, and paid no worſhip to them, particularly the Epicureans: yet they were not called to any account for their opinions, nor for their neglect. Virgil, Horace, and Lucretius, were of this fraternity: and yet were held in no ſmall eſteem. Lucian was born early in the ſecond century, and flouriſhed in the reign of Marcus Antoninus, who ſo grievouſly perſecuted the Chriſtians. He wrote againſt the heathen gods, and ridiculed them groſsly. And this ridicule he publiſhed to the world, at the very time, when theſe perſecutions were carried on. Yet he was never puniſhed, nor even cenſured: on the contrary, he had a lucrative, or, as ſome ſay, an honourable, office from the

* Athenag. Legat. c, i. p. 279.

very

very Emperor, who ſo cruelly afflicted the Chriſtians.

Some of the early fathers, ſuch as Juſtin Martyr, and Athenagoras, complain heavily, and with great truth, of this undue partiality. * Tertullian mentions, that the Chriſtians were upon an equal footing with the philoſophers and others, who maintained their ſeveral opinions; and ſhould conſequently expect equal candour, and juſtice: but theſe were denied them. *What governour*, ſays he, *forces any of your philoſophers to offer ſacrifice; or to bind themſelves by particular oaths impoſed; or to make any idle illuminations by daylight? And yet they openly labour to annihilate your deities, and in their writings accuſe you of ſuperſtition; while you ſtand by, and give them encouragement. Many of them go ſo far as even to abuſe their rulers; and are upheld in ſo doing. Nay, ſo far from being expoſed to wild beaſts, they are rewarded with penſions, and ſtatues.*

In ſhort every religion was tolerated in the Roman empire, except † Chriſtianity.

* Tertull. Apolog. § xlvi. p. 35.
† Athenag. Legat. § i. p. 280.

Againſt

Againſt this there was an inveterate and intolerant hatred. The name itſelf was ſufficient for condemnation. For this prejudice the following reaſon may be given. Many of the Gentile philoſophers deſpiſed the national worſhip, where they reſided: but were very indifferent about its being maintained by others. On the contrary the Chriſtians laboured to annihilate idolatry; and put an end to all ſuperſtition. This affected the baſe worſhip of every country univerſally, and brought upon them the hatred of the world. But Chriſtianity triumphed in the end: though not till its teachers and proſelytes had undergone for ſome centuries all that malice could inflict.

It has been ſaid, I know, of the atheiſt as well as the deiſt, that they are after all left to the light of nature, and philoſophy: and likewiſe to conſcience, where the rule of right is written as plainly and indelibly, as upon braſs or marble. Thus indeed it has been affirmed. Yet theſe helps, notwithſtanding theſe aſſertions, ſeem not of themſelves ſufficient to guide us; as we

may

may judge from thoſe great and learned men, Pliny, Trajan, and Antoninus. Their inhumanity evinces their inſufficiency and blindneſs. In proof of this let us keep in mind the queſtion of Pliny to the Emperor —*Whether the name of Chriſtian alone, though accompanied with no crime, were not ſufficient for condemnation?* We have ſeen Trajan's anſwer; that he would not have Pliny *make any ſearch after them:* indeed there was no occaſion, as the informers were ſo numerous, and active: *But if they are brought before you, and proved to be Chriſtians, let them be* * *puniſhed:* which puniſhment was, in various ſhapes, *death.* And this without any judicial proceſs, or any regard to the innocence of tender age, or the merits of thoſe more advanced. Pliny indeed propoſed an alternative to Trajan; of which he took not the leaſt notice. He deſired to know, whether he ſhould condemn the Chriſtians at once for being ſo

* Mr. M. tranſlates the paſſage—*let them be corrected:* which is not right. All correction is intended for amendment. But thoſe, who are beheaded, burnt, or otherwiſe diſpatched, have little chance of improvement.

named,

named, or for the * crimes annexed to the name. Now the crimes with which the name of Chriſtian was branded, were † *atheiſm, the feeding upon human fleſh, and an inceſtuous and indiſcriminate commerce at their meetings.* It ſignified little which ſide of the alternative Pliny took, as there was no judicial proceſs; and conſequently no opportunity for the injured party to clear themſelves from theſe horrid and unjuſt aſperſions. The conduct of Trajan was as inhuman and irrational, as Pliny's; for he left him to act as he pleaſed for the future, and gave his ſanction to all, that was paſt. Pliny does not aſk, how he might acquit: but which was the beſt plea for condemnation.

The three perſons above mentioned were eſteemed among the wiſeſt of their day. They enjoyed all that the light of nature

* Mr. Melmoth tranſlates the terms—crimina cohærentia nomini—*crimes themſelves* (that is *real crimes*) *in the profeſſion*. But this is by no means a true verſion. What crime could there be in the profeſſion of Chriſtianity?

† Athenag. Legat. c. iii. p. 282, 308, and 312. Juſt. Martyr. Apolog. c. vi. p. 47. Dialog. cum Tryphone, c. 10. p. 111.

and

and philoſophy could afford; and had the internal director, *conſcience*, if that had been ſufficient to guide them. Yet they were cool and deliberate murderers. They failed, notwithſtanding their attainments, in two eſſential articles, *humanity*, and *juſtice*. The poor objects, whom they deſpiſed, and ſacrificed, would have taught them a better leſſon. So ſuperior is Chriſtianity to all worldly wiſdom.

IV.

IV.

PART II.

OF THE UNCERTAINTY, WHICH PREVAILED AMONG THE MOST LEARNED OF THE PHILOSOPHERS

WE have been told a great deal about nature, and the light of nature; and Chriſtianity has been pronounced *as old as the Creation.* By this was meant, that all the eſſential truths, which are taught in the goſpel, were antecedently known by this light: and the Chriſtian ſyſtem in conſequence of it was neither new, nor neceſſary. But this is a great miſtake. How little it is known, and how much it is wanted, at this day, I have ſhewn from a great part of the world being ſtill in a ſtate

of ignorance. And how much they ſtood in need of it of old, we learn from the confeſſions of ſome of the wiſeſt among the philoſophers, both of Aſia, and Greece. They looked with longing eyes for ſome divine information; but could never attain to the bleſſing. Plato and Plutarch ſought earneſtly for the truth; but they continually complained of that obſcurity, under which it was veiled; and through which they could not penetrate. * Plato tells the Athenians, that they would remain in a ſtate of ſleep for ever, if God did not out of pity ſend them an inſtructor. This ſtate of uncertainty is finely deſcribed by Cicero. *I do not*, ſays that excellent writer, *ſuppoſe, that Arceſilas engaged in diſpute with Zeno out of obſtinacy, or a deſire of ſuperiority: but to ſhew that obſcurity, under which all things lie, and which forced Socrates to a confeſſion of his ignorance. And all thoſe, who in a manner were inamoured with Socrates; ſuch alſo as Democritus, Anaxagoras, Empedocles, and*

* In his Apology for Socrates.

almoſt

almoſt all the ancients, were reduced to the ſame confeſſion. They all maintained, that no true inſight could be acquired; nothing clearly perceived, or known: that our ſenſes were limited, our intellect weak, and the courſe of man's life ſhort. Hence *according to Democritus* *, *truth lay buried in the depths of the ſea,* or as ſome relate it,—*in a well without a bottom:* and conſequently could never be diſcovered. Finally, they in general acknowledged, *that univerſal darkneſs prevailed.*

The uncertainty, under which mankind laboured, is farther deſcribed by that moral poet Euripides in his Hippolytus: where he ſpeaks of the miſery and blindneſs of people in this world, and their doubts in reſpect to futurity—

The life of man is all a ſcene of care,
Which knows no intermiſſion. When it's paſt,
Should there be any future bliſs, it lies
In cloud, and dreary darkneſs, unreveal'd.
Yet we, too fondly led, by what we feel,
Prize the brief ſunſhine of this fleeting life,

* Academic Queſtions, p. 1062. b. Gronovii.

Anxious: becauſe we have neither view, nor hope,
Of aught hereafter. Thus we darkling rove,
Amus'd with fables, and poetick dreams.

* Plutarch informs us of the acknowledged debility of human reaſon: and ſays, that in reſpect to truth, thoſe, who had made it their chief ſtudy, confeſſed fairly, that it was difficult to be purſued, and more difficult to be obtained. For it comprehended things, as Empedocles obſerved—

† Which neither eye has ſeen, nor ear has heard,
Nor human mind conceiv'd.

‡ Another poet ſpeaks of the ſhort duration of man upon earth, during which he cannot attain to a true knowledge of either good, or evil; ſo difficult are they to be preciſely diſtinguiſhed. This uncertainty led ſome perſons to deſperation: and of others it made atheiſts. Hence a man is introduced by Euripides, who declares his

* De Audiendis Poetis, p. 15. † Plutarch above, p. 17.
‡ Mimnermus in Stobæo.

diffidence

diffidence by ſaying openly —* *Who art thou, Jupiter? for I know nothing of thee but by hearſay.*

The Want of a proper Remedy.

The firſt philoſophers made noble efforts to eſtabliſh ſome ſalutary doctrines: but they had no good foundation, upon which they could proceed. The Stoicks in particular obſerved, that there was a fitneſs and beauty in virtue, and recommended it ſtrongly. But they were unable to aſcertain its principles, and to maintain it unſophiſticated: and therefore could never place it upon a proper baſis. They were accordingly forced to make virtue its own reward: which did very well in theory, but was not ſufficient for practice. Hence, when difficulties aroſe, their beſt diſciples fell off, and were obliged to give up the cauſe. For they often ſaw virtue debaſed, and vice triumphant, and the worſt cauſe contrary to ſeeming juſtice prevail. For

* Quoted by Juſtin Martyr, and Athenagoras.

this they could not account: nor had they any reſources, to which they could apply. The conſequence was doubt, and deſpair. Hence Cato ſlew himſelf, and Brutus followed his example *,—declaring, when he died, that he had followed virtue, as a reality, but found it a mere illuſion. Such was the nncertainty, which prevailed among ſome of the moſt enlightened nations. All beyond was horrour, gloom, and Stygian darkneſs.

In conſequence of this mental obſcurity, many, who admitted the immortality of the ſoul, ſeem to have rather held, that it did not immediately † die, than that it exiſted for ever. According to ‡ Seneca it could laſt only for a determined period: for a time was to come, when a general

* Dion Caſſ. l. xlvii. p. 525.

† Some ſaid, that the ſoul was diſſipated and loſt: others that it remained for a time: others that it ſurvived always. Cicero Tuſc. Quæſt. l. i. § 9. p. 1144. Again, p. 1151. § 31. It did not die with the body: but ſtill was not immortal.

‡ Conſolation ad Marciam, vol. i. p. 300. See Marcus Antoninus, l. xi. § 3,

conflagration

conflagration would take place, and all things be reduced to their primitive chaotic ſtate. The region of departed ſouls was ſuppoſed to be beneath in the depths of the earth, where thoſe, who had led a good life, had Elyſium for their portion, and enjoyed bowers, ſhades, and fountains; and roved in meads of aſphodel: and the wicked were conſigned to puniſhment in Tartarus. But how permanent this ſituation was, thoſe who maintained it, do not ſeem to have inquired. Beſides, the opinion was founded on no authority; and accompanied with ſuch extravagant fables, as no perſon of ſound reaſon could admit. Hence many individuals, and ſome whole ſects of philoſophers, believed, that the ſoul periſhed with the body. This was unhappily maintained in ſome beautiful lines by Catullus—

The ſun may ſet, and riſe again: but we,
Soon as our ſhort-liv'd taper is extinct,
Sink in a deep, and everlaſting ſleep,
And no more wake to day.

The poet Moſchus writes to the ſame purpoſe in his epitaph upon Bion—

Alas! the mallow in the garden fair,
And herbs, and flowers, may fade: but they again
Riſe up to life, and have their birth renew'd.
But we, the great, the powerful, and wiſe,
Soon as we ſink oblivious; there enſues
A deep, a deadly, ever-during ſleep,
From whence we wake no more.

Hence Seneca in the Troades makes a perſon ſay—*There is nothing in death: and death itſelf is nothing.* And in Salluſt we read to the ſame purpoſe the words of Julius Cæſar—*Death is a diſſolution of all mortal evils. Beyond it there is no room for either happineſs or care.*

This Uncertainty attended with a bad Influence on the Morals of Men: but rectified by Chriſtianity.

This doctrine of a life hereafter, and of future rewards and puniſhments, being ſo obſcurely made known, and ſo partially maintained, in the Gentile world, proved a great

great diſcouragement to virtue, and an incentive to vice. But this defect was made up in the Chriſtian ſyſtem, which is founded upon theſe great truths, that there is a life after this, and a future reſurrection; alſo an appointed ſeaſon, when all men ſhall be tried for their works. Our Saviour therefore, that the reſurrection from the dead might not be eſteemed an ideal notion, put the proof of his miſſion upon his riſing again. This he effected paſt all controverſy, and became *the firſt fruits of them that ſlept.* Of this his diſciples were eye witneſſes: * *to whom he ſhewed himſelf alive after his paſſion by many infallible proofs, being ſeen of them forty days, and ſpeaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.* St. Paul accordingly mentions to the Corinthians the certainty of the fact—*For I delivered to you firſt of all, that which I alſo received: how that Chriſt died for our ſins, according to the ſcriptures: and that he was buried; and that he roſe again the third day,*

* Acts i. 3. † 1 Corinth. xv. 3, &c.

according

according to the ſcriptures. And that he was ſeen of Cephas: then of the twelve. After that he was ſeen of above five hundred brethren at once: of whom the greater part remain unto this preſent; but ſome are fallen aſleep. After this he was ſeen of James: then of all the apoſtles. And laſt of all he was ſeen of me alſo. Add to this the teſtimony of the Roman cohort, which muſt have conſiſted of no inconſiderable number of men. Theſe guarded the ſepulchre, and ſaw with amazement every circumſtance of the reſurrection; and declared the whole to people in the city. This was matter of ſuch notoriety, that it could not be contradicted. Peter therefore in his very firſt addreſs to the * Jews preſſes home this argument of the reſurrection, as a circumſtance undeniable: and adds—† *Therefore let all the houſe of Iſrael know aſſuredly, that God hath made that Jeſus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Chriſt.* And what was the conſequence? The Apoſtle

* Acts ii. † v. 36.

tells

tells us — *The ſame day there were added* to the church, of theſe very perſons, who had *crucified* Chriſt—*about three thouſand ſouls:* and upon another day * *five thouſand.* After this there came in from all parts † multitudes without number.

* Acts iv. 4 † v. 14.

V.

A COMPARATIVE VIEW OF THE CHRISTIAN AND MOHAMMEDAN RELIGIONS.

THE law of Moſes is cancelled, and but imperfectly maintained. And as all other religions upon earth are idolatrous, excepting the Mohammedan, that only can be brought in competition with the religion of Chriſt. But it will be found to loſe greatly by the contraſt. For all, that it has good and laudable, is taken from the former: as there was no other ſource, from whence the impoſtor could borrow. He therefore drew largely: but blended the truths, which he treacherouſly purloined, with fictions of his own creating, and with a permit of ſenſual gratifications, which he adapted to the temper of the people, for whom he wrote. By this unnatural mixture

ture he purpoſed to ruin the religion, to which he was ſo much beholden: and in ſome degree ſucceeded.

He was born at Mecca, a city of Arabia, and lived, and wrote, about ſix hundred years after the death of Chriſt. He admits one God, the creator of all things: and allows him his moſt eſſential attributes. Hence we find this good to have ariſen from evil; that wherever his religion was propagated, all idolatrous worſhip has ceaſed. But then on the other hand the true religion has at the ſame time been exiled: and a large portion of the world been deprived of the light of the goſpel. In conſequence of this deprivation, ſcience, and every liberal art, have been equally baniſhed or depreſſed. He was acquainted with the ſcriptures: and mentions many of the patriarchs and prophets, as holy men, and ſhews a great reſpect to the character of Jeſus Chriſt. He ſpeaks of his miraculous powers, as well as thoſe of his diſciples, and particularly his raiſing of dead perſons to life: Koran, p. 41, c. iii. and

he

he ſtiles them evident * miracles. He deſcribes him as the chief of all prophets, and the Logos, or Word of God, c. iii. p. 40. In one of his † chapters a curſe is denounced againſt thoſe, who do not believe in the hiſtory of Jeſus, the ſon of Mary; and puniſhment both in this world and the world to come. He ſays alſo of the Deity, by whom Chriſt was ſent into the world—*The words of thy Lord are perfect in truth and juſtice; there is none that can change his words.* C. vi. p. 110.

But, though he allows *theſe evident miracles* of our Saviour; yet he ſets aſide his doctrines, and ſubſtitutes his own in their room; though not aſcertained by the leaſt evidence of this kind. Our Saviour ſaid to the Jews, ‡ *The works, which I do in my Father's name, they bear witneſs of me.* § *If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not: but if I do; believe the works: that ye may know and believe, that the Father is in*

* Koran, C. xliii. p. 399. *When Jeſus came with evident miracles,* &c.

† C. iii. p. 43, 44; and c. xix. p. 252.

‡ John x. 25. § John x. 37, 38.

me,

me, and I in him. But Mohammed could make no ſuch appeal. Miracles, he owns, were demanded, as a teſt of his calling; but he * tells us, that none were performed. We have nothing but his bare word for his miſſion.

Yet he tries to make void the religion of Chriſt: though, as we have before ſeen, he allowed him to have been a true † prophet, and the divine Logos, who was ſent by the Deity. This is plain from his own words, for he makes the Deity declare to the world,— ‡ *Verily Chriſt, the ſon of Mary, is the apoſtle of God, and his Word, which he conveyed unto Mary.* § *We gave unto Jeſus, the ſon of Mary, manifeſt ſigns; and we ſtrengthened him with the Holy Spirit.* And, he ſays alſo, that God was *true*, and his word *immutable*. Yet he denies, that Chriſt was the ſon of || God, though Chriſt, *ſtrengthened* with the *Holy Spirit*, declared it: and the *God of truth* gave aſſurances of it, when

* K. c. xvii. p. 236. c. lxxiv. p. 473. n. Particularly c. vi. p. 110. c. xxxvii. p. 371.

† C. iii. p. 40. ‡ C. iv. p. 80, and 89.

§ C. ii. p. 30 || C. ix. p. 153. C. v. p. 85.

he ſaid—*This is my beloved ſon. Theſe failures, and contradictions, ruin the whole of the Impoſtor's ſyſtem. He did not conſider, that he granted too much. Hence upon Mohammed's own principles nobody can be a rational Mohammedan.

The ſame will be the reſult of his doctrines, which differ eſſentially from the precepts of the Goſpel. The notions, which he endeavours to inſpire, have nothing pure, and ſpiritual, but on the contrary are baſe, foul, and ſenſual: and the gratifications, which he promiſes, in the world to come, are equally ſenſual, and baſe. We are told by our Saviour in the ſcriptures, that a man is to be the huſband of one wife; and that there is to be an inſeparable union † between them. He was by Mohammed's confeſſion a prophet of the true God, and the Holy Spirit was with him. Yet in the Koran we find a permit for any perſon to have four wives, and as many concubines as he can maintain. Our Saviour enjoins a mental purity, and a ſpiritual ſacrifice, to-

* Matthew iii. 17. † Matt. xix. 5.

gether

gether with a rational worſhip: of which no notice is taken in the Alcoran. The chief duty of a Muſſulman conſiſts in external ablutions, and ſtated repetitions of prayer, with ſome appointed ceremonies: in which no ſpiritual, nor rational, ſervice is to be found. Such ſervice was unknown to the pretended lawgiver, whoſe views were all baſe and worldly: and theſe he extends even to the life to come. Our Saviour expreſſly tells us, that at the reſurrection—* *They will neither marry nor be given in marriage: but be like the angels of God in heaven.* We are moreover informed, that we ſhall be changed, and have a ſpiritual and glorified body: † *for fleſh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven: neither can corruption inherit incorruption.* But Mohammed gives a different account. And though Mr. Sale would fain palliate the baſe notions of this impoſtor ‡, yet it is manifeſt from his own confeſſion, that the happineſs promiſed by Mohammed, conſiſted in baſe and corporeal enjoyments.

* Matt. xxii. 30. and 50.

† 1 Corinth. xv. 42, 43.

‡ Preliminary Diſcourſe.

How worldly his views were, may be ſeen in the following quotations—* *For him, who dreadeth the tribunal of God, are prepared two gardens—planted with ſhady trees: in each of them two fountains flowing; and of every fruit two kinds. They ſhall repoſe on couches, the lining of which ſhall be of thick ſilk, interwoven with gold: and the fruit of the garden ſhall be near at hand to gather. Therein ſhall receive them beauteous damſels, whom no man hath deflowered before them, nor any* Genius, *having complexions like rubies and pearls. Beſides theſe ſhall be two other gardens of a dark green: in each of them ſhall be two fountains pouring forth plenty of water. In each of them ſhall be fruits and palms, and pomegranates. In them ſhall be agreeable and beautiful damſels, having fine black eyes, and kept in pavilions from public view—Therein ſhall they delight themſelves, lying upon green cuſhions and beautiful carpets.*

There will not only be marriage; but alſo ſervitude in the next world, according

* Koran, c. lv. p. 433.

to

to this prophet *. The very meaneſt in paradiſe will have eighty thouſand ſervants and ſeventy-two wives of the girls of paradiſe: beſides the wives he had in this world †. Alſo—a tent erected for him of pearls, hyacinths, and emeralds. And as marriage will take place, ſo a new race will be introduced in heaven, as we are aſſured by the ſame writer. *If any of the faithful in paradiſe be deſirous of iſſue, it ſhall be conceived, born, and grown up, in the ſpace of an hour* ‡.

We may well ſuppoſe, that the life of Mohammed correſponded with his doctrines: and he will be accordingly found devoted to the moſt ſenſual gratifications, both in theory and practice. He did not wait for the ſuppoſed completion of them in heaven, but indulged at large in this world: and ſaid, that he had a diſpenſation from God to indulge more than others, and to treſpaſs even within the prohibited degrees of conſanguinity. § *O, prophet, we*

* Prelim. Diſcourſe, p. 98. † Ibid. p. 99.

‡ Ibid. p. 99.

§ Koran, c. xxxiii. p. 348.——See alſo p. 349, concerning the privileges granted him in reſpect to women and wives.

have allowed thee thy wives, unto whom thou haſt given their dower: and alſo the ſlaves, which thy right hand poſſeſſeth: and the daughters of thy uncle on thy father's ſide, and on thy mother's ſide; and any believing woman.—This is the peculiar privilege, which is granted to thee above the reſt of the true believers.

His falſhood, and treachery, were equal to his other vices: for which we have his own evidence. We are told by Moſes *, *that God is not a man, that He ſhould lie:* and He is univerſally ſtiled *the God of all truth.* Even Mohammed deſcribes him as a deity of truth and juſtice, whoſe decrees are unalterable. Yet he in another place blaſphemouſly makes Him an abettor of the greateſt falſhood, and ſays, that he had received from God a diſpenſation for perjury.—† *God hath allowed you a diſſolution of your oaths.*

There are ſome other eſſential articles, which make a great difference between the character and doctrines of our bleſſed Sa-

* Numbers xxiii. 19. † C. lxvi. p. 456.

viour,

viour, and thoſe of the Arabian prophet. The whole tenour of the life of Chriſt was love, charity, and good-will towards man, which were attended with repeated exhortations to peace. God is ſtiled the God of peace—* and *the kingdom of God joy and peace*—and † *the fruit of the Spirit is joy, love and peace*—‡ *Follow peace with all men.* But theſe virtues were quite unknown to Mohammed. Yet he gave out, that he was the Paraclete §, or Comforter, promiſed in the goſpel. But ſuch a comforter the world never before, nor ſince, beheld. For he made himſelf the bane of all happineſs, being through his whole life involved in wars and bloodſhed. And this curſe he entailed upon his followers throughout all generations ‖: ſo far was he from meekneſs, long-ſuffering, and from affording the comforts of peace. In the ninth chapter of the Koran he mentions ſome months, in which he would not have

* Romans xiv. 17. † Galat. v. 22. ‡ Heb. xii. 14.
§ Koran, C. lxi. p. 449. See notes.
‖ C. v. p. 84. C. viii. p. 146. C. xlvii. p. 409.

his people make war. * *But when theſe months ſhall be paſt, kill the idolaters, wherever ye ſhall find them: and take them priſoners, wherever ye ſhall find them: and beſiege them, and lay wait for them in every convenient place.* In another place he ſays—† *Attack the idolaters in all the months, &c.*—‡ *When ye encounter the unbelievers, ſtrike off their heads, until ye have made great ſlaughter of them: and bind them in bonds.—Whoſo fighteth for God's true religion, God will not ſuffer his works to periſh.* Mr. Sale mentions this injunction *of* § *waring againſt infidels, which is repeated in ſeveral paſſages of the Koran, and declared to be of high merit in the ſight of God. Thoſe, who were ſlain fighting in defence of the faith being reckoned martyrs; and promiſed immediate admiſſion into paradiſe. This duty is greatly magnified by the Mohammedan divines, who call the ſword the key to heaven and hell*||.

This

* C. ix. p. 149. † C. ix. p. 154. ‡ C. xlvii. p. 409. 410. § Prelim. Diſc. p. 142.

|| Mr. Sale afterwards, p. 143, very incautiouſly, and very injuriouſly (not to ſay worſe) compares this law of Mohammed with the command given by God to the Iſraelites in their journey to Canaan. He ſays, that *they had an extenſive*

This is very contrary to the ſpirit of the goſpel. God is indeed ſtiled *the Lord of hoſts:* and there is a promiſe, that he would go *forth with the armies of Iſrael,* when they were unjuſtly invaded. But ſtill peace was the great object even in war: and the Lord was eſteemed *the God of peace.* * *He maketh wars to ceaſe unto the end of the earth: he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the ſpear in ſunder. He burneth the chariot with fire.* †*The Lord will bleſs his people with peace.* ‡*I will give peace unto the land.* §*For the end of the upright man is peace.* ||*The work of the righteous ſhall be peace.* **The paths *of wiſdom are peace.* The wiſh and prayer of the royal Pſalmiſt were—*†*Scatter thou the people who delight in war.* Yet he was himſelf a great warrior, and a man highly acceptable to the Deity. Yet ſo hateful

extenſive and explicit commiſſion to attack, ſubdue, and deſtroy, all, who were enemies to their religion. Whereas the command was limited to the nations, who were their enemies, and had injured them: ſuch as the Moabites, Edomites, Ammonites, excluſive of the people of Canaan. But of this I ſhall ſay more at the concluſion.

* Pſalm xlvi. 9. † Pſ. xxix. 11. ‡ Levit. xxvi. 6.
§ Pſ. xxxvii. 37. || Iſaiah xxxii. 17. ** Prov. iii. 17.
*† Pſ. lxviii. 30.

was war in the ſight of the Almighty, that he would not ſuffer this excellent perſon to build him a temple, becauſe he had been engaged in that horrid proceſs. * *Then David the king ſtood up—and ſaid—I had in mine heart to build an houſe of reſt for the ark of the covenant of the Lord. But God ſaid unto me: Thou ſhalt not build an houſe for my name: becauſe thou haſt been a man of war, and haſt ſhed blood.*

Theſe were the principles, which prevailed under the firſt diſpenſation, which was only preparatory for a better. When the latter ſucceeded, the virtues of love and charity, even to our enemies, were more ſtrongly enforced. Then were the words of the Pſalmiſt fulfilled—† *Mercy and truth are met together. Righteouſneſs, and peace, have kiſſed each other.* Under the ſecond great lawgiver a more pure and ſpiritual religion took place: and charity, love, and peace, are univerſally enjoined. We are forbidden not only to do evil, but even to conceive it: and to avoid all bitterneſs, and

* 1 Chron. xxviii. 2, 3. † Pſalm lxxxv. 10.

revenge,

revenge, even towards our enemies. We are to abſtain from all retaliation, except ſuch as juſtice demands: and even that juſtice is to be mitigated, as far as reaſon and religion, and public ſecurity will permit.

Religion will always have an effect upon the minds of men; and the happy conſequences will be uniformly in proportion to its excellence.

Such then is the ſuperiority of the Chriſtian religion over that of Mohammed, which I have uſed only as a foil to ſet off the purity and brightneſs of the former. The contraſt is wonderful, and has been finely diſplayed by the very excellent biſhop Sherlock, in his ninth ſermon: with whoſe words I ſhall conclude this chapter.—*Should we ſay, that the Alcoran was not promulged to us by perſons duly commiſſioned, it may be perhaps anſwered, that the Alcoran is as well publiſhed to us, as the Goſpel is to them* (that is, it comes to us as well authenticated) *which has ſome appearance of an anſwer; though the fact is indeed otherwiſe: for even the Alcoran owns Jeſus for a true prophet.*

But

But with reſpect to this inſtance I perſuade myſelf, it can be no very diſtracting ſtudy to determine our choice. Go to your natural religion: lay before her Mahomet, and his diſciples arrayed in armour, and in blood; riding in triumph over the ſpoils of thouſands, who fell by his victorious ſword. Shew her the cities, which he ſet in flames: the countries which he ravaged, and deſtroyed: and the miſerable diſtreſs of all the inhabitants of earth. When ſhe has viewed him in this ſcene, carry her into his retirements. Shew her the prophet's chamber; his concubines, and wives. Let her ſee his adultery; and hear him alledge Revelation, and a divine commiſſion, to juſtify his luſt, and his oppreſſion. When ſhe is tired with this proſpect, then ſhew her the bleſſed Jeſus, humble and meek, doing good to all the ſons of men: patiently inſtructing both the ignorant and perverſe. Let her ſee him in his moſt retired privacies: let her follow him to the mount; and hear his devotions, and ſupplications to God. Carry her to his table, to view his homely fare; and hear his heavenly diſcourſes. Let her ſee him injured, but not provoked. Let her attend him to the tribu-

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nal, and conſider the patience, with which he endured the ſcoffs and reproaches of his enemies. Lead her to his croſs; and let her view him in the agony of death: and hear his laſt prayer for his perſecutors—Father forgive them; for they know not what they do.

When natural religion has viewed both, aſk, Which is the prophet of God? But her anſwer we have already had; when ſhe ſaw part of this ſcene through the eyes of the centurion, who attended at the croſs. By him ſhe ſpoke, and ſaid—Truly this man was the Son of God.

VI. SOME

VI.

SOME POPULAR OBJECTIONS, AND OTHER ARTICLES, CONSIDERED.

Of Difficulties, and myſterious Truths.

IT has been objected to the goſpel, that it contains many things, which are hard to be conceived: and ſome which ſeem contrary to reaſon. And it is undoubtedly attended with difficulties; otherwiſe there would have been no occaſion for teachers, and interpreters. But though there may be ſome things above reaſon; yet there will never be found any, which are contrary. And even the difficulties, upon a due examination of the context, often vaniſh: and ſhew, that the fault is not in the doctrine, but in our own want of apprehenſion.

ſion. Many articles in what we ſtile natural religion are equally difficult to be explained. For inſtance, we ſee often vice triumphant, and virtue depreſſed; for which we cannot account from any light of nature, nor from the religion ſuppoſed to be founded upon it: as that ſyſtem can afford neither reaſon nor remedy, both which are to be obtained from Revelation. The like occurs in natural philoſophy. We find it abound with phænomena, which we ſee and know, but cannot * explain. It is certain, if we may truſt to the beſt writers upon the ſubject, that the objects received by the eye are inverted. How comes it then, that they appear uniformly erect, and in their proper poſition? How can we account for this contrariety? Add to this, that the eyes of a man, being twofold, receive conſtantly a double impreſſion, and repreſent two objects. How comes it, that the ſame perſon experimentally ſees but one? People have laboured to ſolve the difficulty: but thoſe very labours ſhew that

* For inſtance, gravity, magnetiſm, and electricity.

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the difficulty exiſts. Hence we find that ocular demonſtration is attended with ſeeming anomalies. If any perſon had prophetically told Archimedes, or the great philoſopher Eudoxus, that viſion would one day be wonderfully aſſiſted by art; and that the manner of improving ſight would be to place a dark body directly between the object, and the eye, they muſt have thought the prophet out of his ſenſes. And when they heard, that the other way was—in viewing an object not to look at it, but to keep the eye in a quite different direction; what muſt theſe learned men have thought of ſuch means of improvement? How could they digeſt theſe doctrines, by which they were taught, that ſight would be helped by impediments; and that the beſt way of ſeeing an object was to look another way? Yet whoever is at all acquainted with the Gregorian teleſcope, muſt know, that ſuch a dark body does intervene between the eye and the object: and in the Newtonian inſtrument the ſight is directed ſideways at an angle of 90 degrees. Yet the ſyſtem is true, and ſight

greatly benefited: and when once known, the whole is found conſonant to reaſon as well as experience.

If then we meet with many things in common life, and worldly ſcience, which ſeem difficult to comprehend, and ſome beyond our reaſon; we muſt expect to find others above our reaſon in that grand ſyſtem of life and immortality, which Providence has laid before us. And it is our duty to acquieſce; and truſt to the word of God, which cannot deceive.

Concerning Scruples and Difficulties, which obtrude themſelves after Conviction.

When we are certified of the authenticity of the ſcriptures; and are fully convinced, that the Chriſtian religion is true, and of divine original, we muſt guard againſt any ſubſequent impediments; ſuch as the ſacred writers call *ſtumbling-blocks*, and *rocks of offence*. If there ſhould occur any thing, which we do not comprehend, it ſhould be paſſed by without any undue heſitation. For we muſt not ſuffer, what we do not know, to come in competition with that

which

which we do. Ignorance muſt never be put in a balance againſt knowledge; nor uncertainty againſt manifeſt proof: for who would weigh a ſhadow againſt a ſubſtance? The ſcriptures, as I have often mentioned, are of a curious texture: and, if carefully examined, will often by the context ſolve the ſeeming difficulties, which ariſe, and explain themſelves. Beſides, much muſt be left for future inveſtigation: for though the mine is rich and inexhauſtible: yet the ore is not always ſuperficial. It therefore requires both labour and time to arrive at that, which lies deep. We muſt not therefore be diſcouraged in our purſuits, though the truth may not be immediately obvious.

I have high authority for this mode of reaſoning; which, I hope, I may take the liberty to produce. When a Great Perſonage ſome years ago was viſiting her Royal Nurſery, a moſt amiable * Princeſs, who was at that time about ſix years old, ran with a book in her hand, and tears in her

* Her Royal Highneſs the Princeſs Mary.

eyes,

eyes, and ſaid—*Madam, I cannot comprehend it; I cannot comprehend it.* Her Majeſty, with true parental affection, looked upon the Princeſs, and told her not to be alarmed. *What you cannot comprehend to-day, you may comprehend to-morrow: and what you cannot attain to this year, you may arrive at the next. Do not therefore be frightened with little difficulties: but attend to what you do know, and the reſt will come in time.* This is a golden rule; and well worthy of our obſervation.

Many articles which ſeem complicated, and inveloped, will in due ſeaſon, by an eaſy and ſpontaneous evolution, unfold themſelves; and appear obvious to the underſtanding. When therefore we are confirmed in our faith, and convinced of the great and eſſential truths of the goſpel, we ſhould not yield to idle ſurmiſes: nor let our ignorance get the ſuperiority of our knowledge. On the contrary we ſhould ſtand firm, and wait with patience, if haply new light may break in, and this darkneſs be removed. But ſuppoſe it to be in ſome inſtances permanent: what ſignifies a little

remote ſhade and obſcurity to thoſe, who enjoy the brightneſs of day? Even to the laſt there will be ſome things, to which human wiſdom in this life cannot attain.

The Chriſtian Syſtem ſaid to be too local and partial.

Many ſerious perſons have thought it unaccountable, that the Chriſtian religion, if it be ſo excellent, ſhould *want univerſality*. Hence undue ſcruples have ſometimes ariſen to the prejudice of their faith, and peace of mind. This objection is couched in terms, which are liable to miſlead; for when we are told, that *it wants*, *&c.* we are led to infer, that there is a defect in the ſyſtem; and that it fails in ſome material article. Whereas the excellence of its doctrines does not depend upon time, or place; but is the ſame, whether limited, or extended. Light is light, whether confined in a ſepulchral monument; or diffuſed through the whole ſolar ſyſtem. If then we properly ſtate the objection, it amounts only to this, that Chriſtianity is not univerſally admitted; and therefore, as it is intimated,

mated, and feared, not of divine original. But knowledge, wiſdom, juſtice, truth, love, charity, are not univerſal: yet they are divine qualities, and heavenly attributes. Their excellence is not to be meaſured by their reception among men; nor made to depend upon the folly, and blindneſs of the world. The great Author of our religion ſaid from the beginning, that it would not be generally received. He compared it *to a treaſure hid in a field: to a grain of muſtard-ſeed,* which in time would grow up to a tree: alſo *to leaven hid in a large quantity of meal,* by which the whole was in due time to be leavened, and improved. But at what period the completion of his great purpoſe was to be effected, he did not diſcloſe. The work of Providence is however going on: and the religion of Chriſt will always be found excellent, however overlooked, and deſpiſed by the ignorant, and worldly. Its worth does not depend upon the prejudices, and miſconceptions of mankind. What is extraordinary, thoſe who principally condemn it for want of univer-

 ſality,

ſality, are the very perſons, who impede its progreſs.

Concerning Exceptions unduly made to particular Terms, and Modes of Expreſſion.

Every nation has its peculiar manner of expreſſion: and the Jews, and all the oriental nations, were very luxuriant, and bold, in their tropes and figures. We muſt not therefore make any exception to the ſtrong terms, which occur in the ſacred writings; as they are to be found in all the languages of that part of the world, and they are not unfrequent in our own. Our Saviour ſays, that *it is eaſier for a camel to paſs through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.* By this, which was probably proverbial, is meant only, that riches are attended with much danger, and render the reception of the Goſpel very difficult: for a rich man, who had all the requiſites to be his diſciple, refuſed it; becauſe he could not give up his wealth, to which he was devoted. In another place he aſſures his diſciples, that if they *had faith*

as

as a grain of muſtard-ſeed, they might remove mountains. By this is ſignified, that thoſe, who were bleſſed with a ſmall degree of true faith, might perform wonderful things. The woman of Samaria ſays to her people concerning Chriſt—*Come and ſee a man, which told me all things, that ever I did.* Theſe were the words of amazement, upon her recollecting the ſecret articles made known to her, which ſhe thought could never have been diſcloſed. It is ſaid of God's church, that *the gates of hell ſhall not prevail againſt it.* This may ſeem a ſtrange expreſſion. But in old time the elders of cities ſat in the evening at the gates to hear complaints, and to redreſs wrongs. Hence by the gates of the city was meant the council of the place. *Execute judgment in your gate.* Zech. viii 16. *Her huſband is known in the gate.* Prov. xxxi. 23. *Wiſdom crieth in the openings of the gates.* Prov. i. 20, 21. Inſtead of *gate* we ſometimes uſe *houſe* for a grand council. We ſay—*the houſe of commons met, The houſe of lords decreed.* And we alſo ſpeak of *the houſe of convocation.* In doing this we take

as great a liberty, as they, who uſe *gate*. Some of theſe expreſſions ſeem to have been proverbial: as when, upon the repeated Hoſannas of the multitude, our Saviour ſays to his diſciples—*If theſe ſhould hold their peace, the ſtones would immediately cry out*. By this he ſignified to them, that after ſuch ſignal marks of his goodneſs, and manifeſtation of his power, it was impoſſible for the people not to teſtify their admiration. It is ſaid of Solomon, that *all the world ſought to hear his wiſdom*. A decree was given *for all the world to be taxed*.—*Behold all the world is gone after him*. The like expreſſions occur in our own language, and in the languages of our neighbours. We ſay of an aſſembly—*all the world was there*:—alſo, *I have ſearched all the world over*.—*There is not ſuch another in the whole world*. In theſe inſtances the ſenſe is never taken in the wide extent of the words. And in the other examples they are to be underſtood with a proper limitation: as the words are only deſigned by an hyperbole to enhance and enforce what is ſaid. In the ſcriptures *by the whole world or earth* was

often

often meant a very limited portion. It ſometimes comprehended the Roman empire; at other times the region about Judea. It is often confined to the land of Iſrael: and even to the multitude at Jeruſalem. *The whole world is gone out to meet him.* The words *ever* and *everlaſting* are many times to be taken with the like allowances; as in the following inſtances. *I will give the land of Canaan for an everlaſting poſſeſſion. To thee will I give it, and to thy ſeed for ever.—A ſettled place to abide in for ever.—The land that I gave thee for ever and ever.* By theſe expreſſions, however ſtrong, we are to underſtand merely a gift comparatively, and conditionally, permanent: a bleſſing of long * duration. The Grecians expreſſed themſelves in the ſame manner, and alſo the Roman writers: and we likewiſe at this day uſe the ſame form of † words.

* In Seneca the word *æternus* is uſed for *diuturnus*, as Dr. Jortin has juſtly obſerved. Diſcourſes upon the Truth of Chriſtianity, p. 265.

† Thus we ſay—*To him and his heirs for ever.*

Concerning too haſty Deciſion in reſpect to Conſequences.

We ſhould likewiſe take great care never to be impoſed upon by falſe appearances: nor to place to the account of Chriſtianity any of thoſe evils, which enſued in after times from its falſe votaries. Cruel animoſities prevailed, and long, and bloody wars were carried on under the pretext of religion, and out of honour to the Croſs. But war and cruelty muſt not be attributed to Chriſtianity, which breathes nothing but peace and charity; and enjoins meekneſs, and ſubmiſſion, and long forbearance. They commenced from pride, and were carried on by apoſtates and ſemi-pagans: who knew not the genius, nor temper of Chriſtianity; nor the character of the Founder: who tried to maintain their cauſe by the very means, which tended to ruin it. There is not a bleſſing under heaven, which may not be miſapplied and perverted. But we muſt not blame any good gift for an evil, which is not inherent; but ariſes merely from its abuſe. Law may be ſtrained to protect

protect knaves: the church may ſhelter ſacrilege: ſanctity give birth to hypocriſy; and honour afford ſanction to murder. So religion has been made a pretence for the like bad purpoſes: and diſcord, rapine, ſlaughter, and all the fatal conſequences of war, have been imputed to Chriſtianity. But the allegation is falſe and injurious: for they aroſe from another ſource, from a depraved, and adulterated ſyſtem, which grew up in the room of the true religion, and was productive of all this miſchief. The law of truth ſtill remains; and has from its firſt promulgation ſubſiſted in the writings of the evangeliſts, and apoſtles, however we may have departed from it. There it is at this day to be ſeen: and the very eſſence of it, next to our duty to God, is love, charity, and forgiveneſs to one another. We muſt not attribute to Chriſtianity the origin of any evil; any more than impute to the ſun the production of darkneſs.

In oppoſition to this I may be aſked, if Chriſt did not openly declare, that theſe evils would be the certain conſequences of his religion: and that he ſhould himſelf

bring

bring war, and deſolation upon the world. This affords an opportunity of ſhewing, that what appears to ſome an inexplicable difficulty, and a ſtumbling-block not to be ſurmounted, may be found after due conſideration perfectly conſonant to reaſon, and truth. It may farther teach us, how much it behoves us to be upon our guard; and not ſuffer our faith to be affected, though ſome things ſhould appear not quite agreeable to our notions. The paſſage, to which people in their inferences have alluded, is in the tenth chapter of St. Matthew, and the 34th verſe. *Think not, that I am come to ſend peace on earth. I came not to ſend peace, but a ſword.* This has been laid hold of by unbelievers, and even by believers noticed with a kind of alarm; as if the paſſage related to the religion of Chriſt. It has often been mentioned with an air of great concern, as—*a prophecy too fully compleated—a melancholy truth, which has been verified through all ages—a fatal miſchief which operates at this day.* But there ſeems to be no occaſion for any fears on one ſide, as there are no grounds for the imputations

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on the other: for if I miſtake not, the paſſage has been improperly rendered, and totally miſunderſtood.

Our Saviour does not allude to the ſyſtem, which he was to eſtabliſh; nor does he make any mention of religion, much leſs of any conſequences, which were to enſue from it. He is ſpeaking of himſelf, and alludes to thoſe evils, which would neceſſarily be brought upon the Jewiſh nation for their manifold ſins, and their rejection of the Meſſiah. His words therefore by no means relate to the world in general, nor to any diſtant time; but to the land in which he reſided, and the age in which he lived. The true verſion would be—Think not that I am *come to ſend peace upon this* * *land: I came not to ſend peace, but a ſword.* The whole of this tenth chapter is taken up with an addreſs of our Saviour

* It is to be obſerved by thoſe, who are no ſtrangers to the original, that the words are, επι την γην. They are introduced in the very ſame ſenſe Ezekiel xxxiii. 3. Και ιδη την ρομφαιαν ερχομενην επι την γην. *Behold a ſword coming upon the land.* Και εκαλεσε λιμον επι την γην. Pſalm cv. 16. Και εγενετο λιμος επι της γης. Gen. xii. 10. Και Αλλοφυλοι επεθεντο επι την γην. 1 Sam. xxiii. 27. Many other examples might be brought, if it were neceſſary.

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to his apoſtles, whom he had juſt at that inſtant collected. And in this diſcourſe he tries to wean them of their prejudices about worldly honours, and advantages, and of eaſe and peace in life; and to let them know, what they were to ſuffer for his ſake. *Behold I ſend you forth as ſheep in the midſt of wolves. Be ye therefore wiſe as ſerpents, and harmleſs as doves.* He then enumerates the many evils, to which they would be liable; and warns them never to forſake their faith, nor to entertain any wrong notions of his purpoſes, and to guard againſt worldly views: for they were to be perſecuted of all men for his ſake. He then adds the paſſage above:—*Think not that I am come to ſend peace upon this land.* The apoſtles, and diſciples, could not help looking forward with views towards a temporal kingdom. They were perſuaded, as he was the Meſſiah Prince, foretold by the prophets, that in conſequence of it he would erect his throne at Jeruſalem; and that an everlaſting reign of peace and glory would enſue. And though our bleſſed Saviour in this chapter, and elſewhere, taught them a different

ferent doctrine; and mentioned particularly, that his kingdom was not of this world; and that he, who would be his diſciple, muſt take up his croſs, and follow him: yet their prejudices ſtill prevailed. Even St. Peter, when Chriſt gave ſome intimation of his death, cried out—*Far be it from thee, O Lord.* At the very time when our Saviour was aſcending up to Jeruſalem, and in a few days was to ſuffer upon the croſs, his diſciples were diſputing, *who ſhould be greateſt in his kingdom.* And ſtill farther, when he appeared to them after his reſurrection, the firſt queſtion was—*Lord, wilt thou at this time reſtore the kingdom to Iſrael?* Acts i. 6.

The Diſciples of Chriſt, ſo far from co-operating in a Fraud, did not know the Scheme which he was carrying on.

From hence we may perceive, how little they underſtood * the purpoſe of their maſ-

* *Theſe things underſtood not his diſciples at the firſt.* John xii. 16. *They underſtood not that ſaying.* Mark ix. 32. *They underſtood none of theſe things.* Luke xviii. 34. See alſo Luke ii. 50. John viii. 27.—x. 6.

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ter. He was ſenſible, that his words would not have an immediate effect: yet there was a time to come, when they would be brought to their remembrance by the Holy Spirit, and would then have their due weight. He therefore perſiſts in informing them, that they muſt not expect peace, either private or publick. *For I am come to ſet a man at variance againſt his father: and the daughter againſt her mother: and the daughter in law againſt the mother in law: and a man's foes ſhall be of his own houſehold.* This declaration, and theſe ſubſequent diſſenſions, related to that age only, in which the goſpel was to be firſt preached. And of theſe diſſenſions Chriſt was to be the *innocent cauſe:* for who can without blaſphemy ſuppoſe him the real author of evil? They could not relate to remote times; nor to thoſe religious feuds, which were carried on in different parts of the world many centuries afterwards. There was in thoſe later times no ſuch want of union in families. Cities agreed, and provinces co-operated, nay, whole kingdoms were unanimous to carry on in God's

name

name the moſt unnatural, and deſtructive wars: all which have been impiouſly repreſented, as the effects of Chriſtianity. And to this purpoſe our Saviour's words have been miſtakenly quoted. But he was warning his diſciples of partial family diviſions, which would ſoon in that age enſue upon their preaching of the Goſpel. For as the doctrines were new, they would not have an equal effect upon all of the ſame family. And as a prejudice in favour of parents, and relations, was natural, but might be attended with fatal conſequences towards thoſe, who were otherwiſe ready to embrace the goſpel; our Saviour at his firſt ſetting out warns his diſciples, and all who were willing to be admitted into his fold, of their danger: and immediately proceeds with telling them, that they muſt guard againſt all prejudice, and partiality.—*He that loveth father, or mother, more than me, is not worthy of me. And he that loveth ſon, or daughter, more than me, is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his croſs, and followeth me, is not worthy of me.* We may perceive plainly, that the whole

whole addreſs of our Saviour to his apoſtles relates to the time, when the goſpel was to be firſt preached; and to the troubles, and difficulties, with which it would be attended. And when he mentions, that he was not come to *ſend* (after his death) *peace upon the land, but a ſword*; our Saviour, as may be ſeen by the context, alludes to the approaching war of the Romans, and to the ruin of Jeruſalem: which with all its calamities he foretells at large. He then mentions thoſe unavoidable diviſions, which would take place among people of the ſame family: as ſome would receive the goſpel, and others periſh in their unbelief. He therefore admoniſhes his diſciples to hold their duty to him dearer, than any worldly friendſhip, and connexion. They were to break through all ties for his ſake, and to flee away from the approaching evils: for he would bring a ſword upon the land; and the peace, which they expected, would not be their portion. This will explain a paſſage, which has been thought difficult, in another chapter to the ſame purpoſe. Matt. xxiv. 34. Our Saviour had told his diſciples—

ples—*This generation ſhall not paſs away till all theſe things be fulfilled.* And he farther intimated, that his words would have weight: for thoſe, who were wiſe, would certainly withdraw themſelves at the criſis. In conſequence of this there would be a ſeparation between people occupied in the very ſame operation, to the ſalvation of the one part, and the ruin of the other.—*Then ſhall two men be in the field: the one ſhall be taken, and the other left*, or preſerved. *Two women ſhall be grinding at the mill: the one ſhall be taken, and the other left*, or be ſaved. All this relates to diviſions in families, and ſocieties in reſpect to Chriſt, and his goſpel: when one part would be taken off by the ſword, and the other excepted, and preſerved, by timely withdrawing from the approaching evil. It is very remarkable, that Joſephus in his hiſtory of the war, and the ſiege of Jeruſalem, mentions the Phariſees, Sadducees, Zelots, and other ſects, and the tumults and ſeditions, which prevailed at that calamitous ſeaſon: but not one word occurs of any Chriſtian being engaged in them.

Notwithſtanding theſe cautions and declarations, his diſciples could not for a long time comprehend the truths, which were recommended to them; nor believe, either that their Lord ſhould ſuffer, or that their city would be ruined. In this manner I have endeavoured to explain this particular portion of ſcripture; which ſeems to have been miſapplied greatly: and in conſequence of it many improper and fatal inferences have been made, to the prejudice of true religion.

Some Obſervations upon the unpromiſing Means, by which the grand Scheme of the Goſpel was effected.

And here, by way of corollary, let us look back and conſider the means, by which our Saviour thought proper to carry on his ſcheme of the goſpel; and his firſt overtures to thoſe, by whom it was to be promoted. We have ſeen, that upon the firſt appointment of the apoſtles, who were to be his inſtruments in this grand operation, he tells them, that they would be ſent forth againſt bitter enemies, *like ſheep among wolves:*

wolves: that they would be brought before councils, and kings, for his name ſake; and be ſcourged, and otherwiſe perſecuted: that many of them would be alienated from their moſt dear connexions; and make thoſe their foes, who were of the ſame houſehold. And he intimates, that after a life of tribulation, and ſufferings, they were at laſt to take up their croſs, and follow him. This ſeems to have been a ſtrange invitation to thoſe, whom he wanted to make his friends; and very unpromiſing means to recommend, and carry on, any purpoſe. However the great ſcheme was carried on by thoſe very perſons, who forſook him, and denied him, and, as we have ſeen above, during his life could never comprehend his meaning: yet at laſt brought the goſpel ſyſtem to perfection. This may appear a ſtrange paradox: yet it was verified in every article.

In this Proceſs there could be no Fallacy.

And here I muſt obſerve to thoſe, who like Jordano Bruno, and other infidels, think the whole of Chriſtianity to have

been a fiction, and the founder of it a deceiver; that the deceit muſt have been the moſt extraordinary, that ever was impoſed upon the world. No impoſtor ever formed a ſcheme, that was not to be diſcovered till after his death. Our Saviour at this rate went through a life of trouble, want, and perſecution, to carry on a deſign, from which no emolument could enſue; and which was to be brought to light after his deceaſe, by perſons, who were not acquainted with it: and who were knowingly to undergo the ſame perſecutions. He told the people—that *the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air neſts: but the Son of man had not where to lay his head.* All this he underwent, and much more, to recommend a cauſe, which ſeemed afterwards to have died with him; when his diſciples forſook him, and fled; and had neither means, nor knowledge, to proſecute the purpoſed ſyſtem. How then was it effected? for that it was fully compleated, we are witneſſes at this day. I anſwer—Not by human means; but by the aſſiſtance promiſed by our Saviour, through which only it could be made known

known and promoted. He accordingly ſays to his apoſtles, who did not comprehend his purpoſe—*Theſe things have I ſpoken unto you, being yet preſent with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghoſt, whom the Father will ſend in my name, he ſhall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatever I have ſaid unto you.* John xiv. 25, 26. When therefore our Saviour appeared to them ſoon after his reſurrection, he bade them remain in Jeruſalem, and *wait for the promiſe of the Father*, which was the gift of the Holy Spirit. They were then to *be endued with power from on high*, Luke xxiv. 49. Accordingly upon the feaſt of Pentecoſt, when they met in full aſſembly, the Holy Ghoſt came upon them with an ample effuſion: and they were gifted with that ſalutary knowledge, to which they were before ſtrangers; and with the gift of tongues, by which they were enabled to convey it to the moſt diſtant countries. By theſe means the Goſpel of Chriſt ſoon triumphed over the learning of Greece and Rome, and the ignorance of other nations. Theſe were two formi-

dable obſtacles, which could not but by a miracle be ſurmounted.

In this manner were the prejudices of theſe excellent perſons removed: and there is reaſon to believe, from good authority, that even during the ſhort miniſtry of the apoſtles, and their * diſciples, the goſpel of Chriſt crucified was known from Gades to the Ganges; that is, according to the language of the times, to the ends of the world. The finger of God was manifeſt through the whole of this proceſs. Among the many evidences in favour of the goſpel, its purity, and excellence above all others, prove its divine original. Next to theſe is to be conſidered its wonderful progreſs. As it was too ſublime for human wit to deviſe; ſo it was too difficult to be carried into execution by any human power. Laſtly, let us look upon the inſtruments, by which it was under Providence promoted;—a ſet of illiterate and ignoble Galileans, who had nothing but their integrity to recommend them: who had no abilities to frame the

* I mean the firſt century.

ſyſtem;

ſyſtem; and entertained every prejudice to defeat it: who, having been diſappointed in their views of peace, happineſs, and honour in this life, were by a divine influence led to encounter pain, poverty, and ſhame, for the ſake of the goſpel, which had been made known to them by inſpiration; and at laſt to lay down their lives, as a proof of their faith and attachment.

Obſervations upon Part of the Eighth Chapter of Judges; and ſome other Portions of Scripture, which are connected with it.

The paſſage, to which I allude, is where the children of Iſrael offer the ſovereign rule to Gideon; which he refuſes both for himſelf, and his ſon after him: and tells them, *The Lord ſhall rule over you*, ver. 23. We are likewiſe informed in the book of Samuel, that the people petitioned for a king; which diſpleaſed the prophet of the Lord: and their requeſt was looked upon as very ſinful. 1 Sam. viii. 5. A political writer, in a late popular * treatiſe, has from

* Common Senſe, p. 13, &c.

theſe paſſages endeavoured to ſhew, that all royalty is abominable: that *it was introduced into the world by the heathens—and the moſt proſperous invention the devil ever ſet on foot for the promotion of Idolatry.* He ſays, that *monarchy is ranked in the ſcriptures as one of the ſins of the Jews: for which a curſe in reſerve is denounced againſt them.* He then quotes the whole proceſs of the people with the prophet Samuel; and makes ſeveral deductions from this hiſtory, the chief of which I know not how to admit. That the people ſinned is manifeſt: but that monarchy was odious in the ſight of God, and invented by the devil, is a moſt unwarrantable concluſion. Yet he inſiſts, that *theſe portions of ſcripture are direct, and poſitive. They admit of no equivocal conſtruction. That the Almighty hath here entered his proteſt againſt monarchical governments is true: or the ſcripture is falſe*, p. 19. This is a terrible alternative, and very alarming: but I hope after all, that we may free ourſelves from this dilemma, and ſhew that theſe oppoſite articles can by no means be inferred from the text. The objection is founded

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in the moſt groſs miſapprehenſion of the ſcriptures, and ignorance of the plain purport of the paſſages to which he alludes. He then ſays—*To the evil of monarchy we have added that of hereditary ſucceſſion: and as the firſt is a degradation and leſſening of ourſelves; ſo the ſecond, claimed as matter of right, is an inſult, and an impoſition on poſterity.* Such are the ſentiments of this ſprightly writer: who has aſſiſted abroad in forming a democracy, and it has been completed to his wiſh. He does not however ſtop here, as may be ſeen by his inveteracy to all kingly rule; which he tries to prove from ſcripture to have been a baſe, diabolical, ſyſtem, contrary to the ordinances of God, and abominable in his ſight.

But the whole is a great miſtake: and he has founded his argument upon paſſages, which he did not ſufficiently conſider; and which in every inſtance militate againſt his opinion. And this I mention to ſhew, how far this politician has been miſled by prejudice; and how much jealouſy and fixed hatred have darkened his mind. Kingly

rule

rule was ſo far from being abhorred by God, and reputed an abomination, that it was inſtituted among the Iſraelites by his command, and upheld in an hereditary ſeries by his authority. It was told them, before they were conſtituted a nation, that they ſhould one day have a king. And they were ordered not to chooſe *one from among the heathen*: nor indeed to chooſe at all. *Thou ſhalt in any wiſe* (that is, by all means) *ſet him*, (that perſon) *king over thee, whom the Lord, thy God, ſhall chooſe: one from among thy brethren ſhalt thou ſet king over thee.* Then the duties of the king are mentioned, which he was carefully to fulfil—*to the end that he may prolong his days in the kingdom, he and his children after him.* Duet. xvii. 15, 16—20. By which is intimated an hereditary ſucceſſion. After that the Iſraelites were ſettled in the land of promiſe, they were for a long time governed only by Judges. The firſt overture towards a change in their conſtitution was, after a ſignal victory, made to Gideon, whom they requeſted to be their king. But he nobly refuſed their offer, and—*ſaid unto them*,

them, I will not rule over you; neither ſhall my ſons rule over you: the Lord ſhall rule over you. Judges viii. 23 *. He anſwered wiſely: for the Iſraelitiſh government was a Theocracy, and God *was king in Jeſhuron.* Hence nobody would take upon him rule, unleſs it were delegated to him by the Deity. At laſt, in the time of Samuel, the Iſraelites applied to that prophet, and begged, that he would appoint them a king: for they did not preſume to chooſe one themſelves, but ſaid, *Now make us a king to judge us, like all the nations.* 1 Samuel viii. 5. They had lived in an unſettled and precarious ſtate for a very long time; and found the neceſſity of having ſome one ſuperior to all the reſt; by whoſe authority they might be more completely conducted. Their requeſt was well founded: the only fault was, that they did not wait the time appointed, but anticipated the good purpoſes of the Deity: who knew their neceſſities, before they aſked, and had appointed a remedy. The prophet was griev-

* His ſon ſoon after him ſet up for himſelf, and aſſumed royalty; but he was not long after ignominiouſly ſlain.

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ed at their demand; becauſe they appeared to be diſſatisfied with his conduct. *But the Lord ſaid unto Samuel, Hearken to the voice of the people in all that they ſay unto thee: for they have not rejected thee; but they have rejected me, that I ſhould not reign over them.* In conſequence of this, Samuel, by divine appointment, pitched upon Saul for this high office: and anointed him with oil in the name of the Lord, and afterwards produced him before all the people. *And Samuel ſaid to all the people, See ye him whom the Lord hath choſen.* Ch. x. 24. Thus the people made their requeſt: but God appointed. Hence the kings were ſtiled the Lord's anointed, and eſteemed the ſubſtitutes of God; and their perſons and characters held ſacred. David was perſecuted by Saul, and in continual danger of his life. Yet when he had him at a great advantage, he would not hurt him, nor ſuffer his eager companion to do him any injury. *And David ſaid to Abiſhai, Deſtroy him not: for who can ſtretch forth his hand againſt the Lord's anointed, and be guiltleſs?——The Lord forbid, that I ſhould*

ſtretch

ſtretch forth my hand againſt the Lord's anointed. 1 Samuel xxvi. 9, 11.

So far was God from abhorring kingly rule, or monarchy, that he ordained it for the people of Iſrael; and afterwards confirmed it. In conſequence of this it was attended with his bleſſing. For the people, who had been for ſome centuries in a contemptible ſtate, and in a courſe of vaſſalage by turns to all their neighbours, became at once a very reſpectable nation: and ſo early as the reign of the ſecond prince, they held all theſe neighbouring people in ſubjection. They were all tributary to David. *The Lord preſerved David whitherſoever he went.* 2 Samuel viii. 6. And he vouchſafed to aſſure him, that he would farther bleſs him in his ſucceſſors. *I will raiſe up thy ſeed after thee, that ſhall be of thy ſons: and I will eſtabliſh his kingdom: his throne ſhall be for evermore.* 1 Chron. xvii. 11. 14. *And Solomon reigned from the river* (Euphrates) *unto the land of the Philiſtines, and the border of Egypt.* 2 Chron. ix. 26.—*For he had dominion over all the region on this ſide the river: and he had peace on all ſides round about him: and Judah*

and

and Iſrael dwelt, every man, under his vine, and under his fig tree. 1 Kings iv. 24, 25.

The ſucceſſion was hereditary: but failed in the firſt inſtance in the line of Saul; which was ſet aſide by the expreſs order of the Deity. It was however maintained in an uninterrupted ſeries among the people of Judah in the family of David, as God had intimated, that it ſhould be. And though that people became in time very wicked; yet their kingdom was better regulated, and in time more powerful, than that of Iſrael, and in conſequence of it laſted for a longer ſeaſon.

And whereas he ſays, that monarchy was the work of an infernal agent for the introduction of idolatry; we may be aſſured of the expreſs contrary; and that it was ordained by God to remedy that very evil, which had taken place among his people. This is evident from the temple at Jeruſalem planned, and perfected, by two of their firſt kings; and from the worſhip of the true God by theſe means eſtabliſhed, when it was loſt among other nations. And this worſhip was kept up by their ſons, who came after them in hereditary ſucceſſion.

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And though there were ſome, who introduced foreign rites, and there was at all times a fatal propenſity to idolatry; yet very excellent princes aroſe, who tried to ſtem the torrent, and to reduce the national worſhip to its former purity. And it was for a while maintained. But in the ſiſter kingdom there was a falling off from the beginning: and a baſe worſhip immediately took place. This was introduced, and upheld, by thoſe apoſtate princes, who for the moſt part obtained the ſovereign rule either by election, or uſurpation. In conſequence of this the kingdom was ſubject to all thoſe evils, with which this bad policy is attended: ſuch as factions, and laſting animoſities between the prevalent, and diſappointed parties.

We may from hence perceive, that this political * writer is miſtaken in every article

* The gentleman, whoſe opinions I have taken the liberty to controvert, held an honourable poſt under Congreſs during the American war: and acquitted himſelf with great zeal, and addreſs. But now the war is over, it is wonderful, that he ſhould continue his bitterneſs, and ſpread contagion in another clime. The Americans ſought independency; and they have obtained it. And as the whole is now ſettled, may

ticle of his allegation; and did not underſtand a ſingle text, which he quotes, or to which he refers. We may therefore without any breach of charity conclude, that he has been by no means duly converſant in the ſacred writings: and in conſequence of it ſeems to have but little of that *fear* before his eyes, *which is the beginning of wiſdom.* For, ſhocking to repeat! what is the immediate work of God, he in expreſs terms attributes to the operation of the *devil.* The inference which naturally follows is plain. Every perſon, who is at all tinctured with a zeal for religion, and a love of truth, will form his judgment accordingly.

may they enjoy every bleſſing of heaven. May they improve in religion, and morality; in arts and ſciences: and equal every nation of Europe in all, that is good, and great. This is my wiſh: and may it be confirmed. But then let us obtain from them an equal portion of charity, and goodwill. The conteſt, I ſay, is paſt. Why then does animoſity any longer ſubſiſt, and a turbulent ſpirit prevail, like the ſullen ſwell of an unquiet ſea, after the ſtorm is over? Why does this perſon in particular unneceſſarily expend his labours in fomenting diſſentions and promoting extraneous evil? Why does he embroil himſelf with the feuds of France; or the politics of Great Britain? Does he think, that a mine is formed, and a train laid, to blow up our excellent conſtitution? (May God in his infinite mercy preſerve us from ſuch a calamity.) Still, Why does he lend his ſparkling firebrand to quicken the exploſion?

Concerning

Concerning the Objection made to the Slaughter of the Canaanites.

There is no part of the ſacred writings, which has been eſteemed ſo exceptionable, as the account given of the ſlaughter of the ſeven nations in Canaan. The impropriety of the fact has been uſed by many, who were no friends to Revelation, and who have announced it to have been a moſt unjuſt and cruel proceeding; and unworthy both of God and man. But they, who place it in this very unfavourable light, do not conſider all the leading circumſtances, with which it is accompanied. Thoſe, who have a due faith of the ſcriptures, and a true ſenſe of the juſtice of the Deity, muſt neceſſarily acquieſce in the hiſtory, as delivered: for the whole was the work of God, being authorized by him. But without having recourſe to this expedient, let us conſider the hiſtory of the Canaanites; and ſee, whether they did not amply deſerve all, that was inflicted upon them. They are repreſented as wicked, and degenerate,

beyond all other nations. And if it had pleaſed God to have ſwept them away by a deluge, or buried them quick by an earthquake, I do not ſee, how any body could have arraigned the proceeding. Such fearful events have happened in different ages; and are ſtill not unfrequent upon the great weſtern continent. But who in any of theſe inſtances called in queſtion either the wiſdom, or juſtice of God; though theſe people did not offend, as the Canaanites offended?

But it will be ſaid, that inſtead of any ſuch judgments, He made the Iſraelites the executioners of His purpoſe, whom the Canaanites could not have injured. We will admit this for the preſent. But why will you not allow the ſame licence to the God of all juſtice, as you grant to every earthly monarch? There is not a king, that reigns, who does not either in his own perſon condemn thoſe, whom he thinks worthy of death: or elſe delegates his power to magiſtrates, and judges; and afterwards to inferior officers, by whom delinquents are taken

taken off. Every year, and almoſt every month, affords inſtances of theſe melancholy, but neceſſary, proceedings. And though in civilized ſtates the number may not at any particular time be very great; yet by degrees it increaſes; and a multitude in time will be found to have ſuffered.

But ſtill it may be urged, that the aggregate can never equal the carnage in the land of Canaan. Let it be allowed, but it will be found of little moment: for we muſt conſider, that the juſtice of condemnation does not depend upon the frequency of execution, nor the numbers conſigned to death. When a ſet of men have rendered themſelves not only unworthy, but pernicious, citizens, and enemies to mankind, (it matters not whether ten, or twenty, or twenty myriads) they are all equally obnoxious to the law, and their lives forfeited. I therefore aſk again—Why will you not grant to the Deity the ſame privilege which you allow to man?

But, it will be ſaid, no law involves

whole families*; nor cuts off wives and children, though the chief perſons, and leaders, ſhould be ever ſo guilty. Undoubtedly no human edict ſhould be carried to ſuch an extremity, though there ſhould be ſtrong ſuſpicions of future degeneracy and retaliation. For man is not gifted with foreknowledge; nor *can he try the heart and reins.* The lives, and fortunes of a whole community muſt not be determined by conjecture, and ſurmiſe. Yet people will ſometimes be guided by forecaſt: and their determinations are often conſonant to reaſon and truth. A perſon, who plants a number of trees, and finds them degene-

* However whole families are ſometimes involved to a degree in the conſequences of another's guilt. When any man ſuffers by the law, his wife, children, and relations, are more or leſs affected by his puniſhment: and ſometimes brought to ruin. It pleaſes God to let evils of many kinds operate indiſcriminately. In plagues and epidemical diſorders parents and children are alike ſwept away. Children likewiſe are greatly injured by their parents vices: and are liable from a better ſtate to be reduced to poverty, ſhame, contempt, and ignorance, to the hurt of both body and mind. Such is the original conſtitution of man, which cannot, unleſs we were new formed, be corrected in this life. But it will be remedied, and the evils compenſated in the next, to all thoſe, who merit the bleſſing.

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rate, and become an impediment to others, will pluck them up, young and old; and commit them to the flames. Once more therefore I ſay, if this be reaſonable in man, who ſees but in part; why will you not allow the ſame prerogative in God, whoſe attribute is not precarious forecaſt, but foreknowledge abſolute? If he made the Iſraelites the miniſters of his will to pluck up and deſtroy: the ſame is done by every earthly prince, who in like manner delegates his power. In reſpect to the Iſraelites, the commiſſion was very properly given; as it made them inexcuſable, if they were ever guilty of the like abominations.

Of the Uſurpation, of which the Canaanites were guilty.

But there are other things to be conſidered, which will make this objection leſs and leſs formidable. The Canaanites were certainly uſurpers: and had acted in open defiance of God's ordinance, by ſeizing upon the land appropriated from the beginning to the children of Iſrael. Moſes ac-

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cordingly in a very ſublime hymn, which he compoſed when he was going to leave his people, intimates to them, that the land of Canaan was their peculiar inheritance. He ſays, that the traditon was well known, and of long ſtanding. * *Remember the days of old; conſider the years of many generations. Aſk thy father, and he will ſhew thee: thy elders, and they will tell thee. When the Moſt High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he ſeparated the ſons of Adam; he ſet the bounds of people* (in general) *according to the number of the children of Iſrael.* We find, that in the primitive diviſion of the earth the future ſons of Jacob were particularly conſidered: and the limits of other nations ſo ordered, that there might be a particular region appointed; which was to be adapted to their future extent, and number. *For the Lord's portion is his people. Jacob the lot, or meaſure, of his inheritance.* In the Euſebian † Chronicle of Scaliger mention is made of Canaan the ſon of Ham firſt making an innovation in the world. He treſpaſſed upon

* Deuteron. xxxii. 7, &c. † P. 10.

the

the rights of his brethren, and ſeized upon the land, which had been appropriated to God's future people. That it was deſtined to them appears by its being uniformly called *the land of promiſe:* and it ſeems to have been for a long time vacant: no nation having the boldneſs to ſeize it. But ſome ſhort time before the arrival of Abraham, the ſons of Canaan had taken it to themſelves, and occupied the whole. Hence it is ſaid, when the patriarch was paſſing by Sichem, that * *the Canaanite was then in the land.* By this is intimated, that this people were but lately come into that country. When therefore the Iſraelites were brought to Canaan, they came to their own inheritance: and thoſe, who had uſurped their property, knew it; and knew by whom it had been appointed. Their alarm was accordingly very great. Hence, when the Iſraelites were upon their march from Egypt, Moſes takes notice of the terror, this would cauſe among the nations of Canaan. † *The people ſhall hear, and be*

* Gen. xii. 6.—*The Canaanite and Perizzite dwelt then in the land.* Ch. xiii. 7. † Exodus xv. 14, &c.

 afraid:

afraid: ſorrow ſhall take hold of the inhabitants of Paleſtina. All the inhabitants of Canaan ſhall melt away: fear and dread ſhall fall upon them. By the greatneſs of thy arm they ſhall be as ſtill, as a ſtone: till thy people paſs over, whom thou haſt purchaſed. Thou ſhalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of their INHERITANCE: *in the place, O Lord, which thou haſt made for thee to dwell.* The woman of Jericho told the two ſpies, who came ſecretly to her houſe—* *I know that the Lord hath given you this land: and your terror hath fallen upon us; and all the inhabitants of the land faint, becauſe of you. And the men, when they returned, told Joſhua—Truly the Lord hath delivered into our hands all the land: for even all the inhabitants of the land do faint before us.* Theſe alarms were the terrors of conſcience: and aroſe from a ſenſe of their guilt, in having ſacrilegiouſly ſeized upon the Lord's portion. Thus we find, that the natives knew their treſpaſs, and dreaded the conſequences. The people of Gibeon

* Joſhua ii. 9, &c.

were

were ſenſible, that they were devoted to ruin; and therefore reſolved to avoid it by obtaining mercy of the Iſraelites. They accordingly ſent an * embaſſy to them, and by a ſtratagem obtained their alliance; which was confirmed to them by an oath. They were ſome of the moſt reſpectable people of Canaan: and their cities were † Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kirjath-jearim. Their making peace with the Iſraelites cauſed a freſh alarm among the inhabitants of the country—‡ ſo *that they feared greatly, becauſe Gibeon was a great city; as one of the royal cities—and all the men thereof were mighty*. Yet however ſtrong and powerful, they had the ſenſe to know, that they had obtruded themſelves impiouſly, where they had no right: and that the inheritance, which they had ſeized, would be transferred to the true heirs. They therefore make this excuſe to Joſhua for their having deceived him—§ *Becauſe it was certainly told thy ſervants, how that the Lord thy God com-*

* Joſhua ix. 3, &c. † Ver. 17. ‡ Chap. x. 2.
§ Chap. ix. 24.

manded

manded Moſes to give you all the land: and to deſtroy the inhabitants.

We find from the hiſtory above, that the Canaanites were rebels and apoſtates; who knew the will of God, yet impiouſly endeavoured to defeat his purpoſe. They appear to have been a wicked race, and their offſpring promiſed to be worſe; for they were continually adding to their iniquities; upon which account God ordered them to be cut off by the ſword. How juſtly they were doomed to extirpation may be ſeen by thoſe which remained. For notwithſtanding the peremptory order of the Deity many did ſurvive; particularly in the five cities of the Philiſtim, and in the neighbourhood of Sidon and Tyre: with ſome other large bodies within the border of Iſrael. And theſe turned out through all their generations the moſt iniquitous of any people upon earth, being devoted to the moſt baſe and obſcene worſhip; and to thoſe horrid rites of Baal and Moloch: performing *their abominations upon every hill, and under every* * *green tree:*

* Deut. xii. 2. 1 Kings xiv. 23.

and

and offering their ſons and daughters for burnt offerings to * *devils.*

If then it be ever proper to take off a criminal by a human law; how can we preſume to diſpute the juſtice of Providence in devoting theſe nations to deſtruction, who were rebels and apoſtates, and would have proved the greateſt enemies to his church and religion? Nay, their poſterity, few as they may be comparatively conſidered, would many times (had it not been for a miraculous interpoſition) have brought them both to ruin.

Explanation of Deuteronomy, Chap. xx. Ver. 10. *and Objections obviated.*

The Holy Scriptures, as they are of ſo great antiquity, muſt be attended with ſome difficulties; for they refer to events and cuſtoms, which have been long obſolete. Yet they are ſo happily compoſed, that many of theſe difficulties are eaſily ſolved, if we will but conſider the context, and likewiſe apply to thoſe other paſſages, with

* Pſalm cvi. 37. Deut. xxxii. 17.

which

which the hiſtory is connected. Through neglect of this caution, and for want of that due reverence, which ſhould be ſhewn to theſe ſacred hiſtories, people have run into very groſs miſtakes, to the great prejudice of the word of God. An inſtance to this purpoſe I will lay before the reader. It is the paſſage, to which Mr. Sale * refers, when he ſays, in ſhocking terms, *that the Jews had a divine commiſſion, extenſive and explicit enough, to attack, ſubdue, and deſtroy, the enemies of their religion.* Therefore, as every nation under heaven was oppoſite to them in this article, the command muſt extend to univerſal devaſtation. Sir John Marſham, who had greater abilities, and more true learning, than Mr. Sale, was led into the ſame miſtake. The paſſage, of which he treats, is as follows. † *When thou comeſt nigh unto a city to fight againſt it, then proclaim peace unto it. And it ſhall be if it make thee anſwer of peace, and open unto thee; then it ſhall be, that all the people, found therein, ſhall be tributaries unto thee, and*

* Sale's Koran, Prefatory Diſcourſe, p. 143.
† Deuteron. xx, 10, &c.

ſhall

*ſhall ſerve thee. And if it make no peace with thee, but will make war againſt thee; then thou ſhalt beſiege it. And when the Lord thy God hath delivered it into thy hands, thou ſhalt ſmite every male thereof with the edge of the ſword. But the women and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, even all the ſpoil thereof, ſhalt thou take unto thyſelf: and thou ſhalt eat the ſpoil of thine enemies, which the Lord thy God hath given thee. Thus ſhalt thou do to all the cities, which are very far * off from thee; which are not of the cities of theſe nations* (that is, which are not of the cities within the limits of Canaan). Deuteron. xx. 10, &c.—— Upon this the learned Marſham makes the following comment. *From theſe words the Hebrew nation imagined, that they had a right without any pretext to levy war, if they did but formally declare it, upon any neighbouring nation, wherever their leaders ſhould chooſe to lead them. And this they thought,*

* Far off in reſpect to the Canaanites juſt before mentioned, who were in the land, and who were to be treated more ſeverely. Among the nations mentioned far off may be reckoned Moab, Ammon, Edom, Hamath, Damaſcus.

that

that they might put in execution without any pretence of injury received, or of retaliation; or any plea of ſelf-defence: but merely to make acquiſition of empire. This was a ſufficient reaſon with them for making war. For the only grounds for war of old aroſe from the luſt of empire.* This is a cruel allegation: and quite contrary to the meaning of Moſes, and to the purpoſe of the Deity, by whom the law was given. The Hebrews never entertained any ſuch opinion, as the author attributes to them. They were for the moſt part confined to a narrow region, and were appointed from the beginning to be a ſeparate people; and to have as little connexion, as poſſible, with other nations. Foreign expeditions to any diſtance were precluded: for they were hemmed in by mountains, or deſerts, or by jealous, and hoſtile neighbours. Such were the limits, by which they were bounded, and beyond theſe they

* This is contradicted by the hiſtorian Trogus Pompeius; and we have the evidence of all antiquity in oppoſition to the notion. In very early times they entertained no thoughts of forming empires: nor were any upon record founded. The hiſtory of the Aſſyrian under Ninus is a fable.

never

never thought of making any ſettlement. They had no permit to invade neutral nations. There is a tacit prohibition throughout the whole law of Moſes. Had the learned Marſham conſidered duly, what had preceded in the beginning of the chapter, and alſo a circumſtance in the paſſage, which he quotes; he would not have been led into ſo dangerous a miſtake. The chapter ſets out with giving an account, how the Iſraelites were to behave in war, both in reſpect to the Canaanites, and to other nations, who were hoſtile. Of the former I have ſpoken, and ſhewn, that they were to be extirpated, if they ſtayed, on account of their great wickedneſs and ſacrilege; and their daring oppoſition to God. But to other cities, which were at a diſtance in reſpect to Canaan, the Iſraelites were to behave in a different manner. In this chapter therefore directions are given about the proceſs to be obſerved: and it begins with theſe words.—*When thou goeſt forth to battle*, &c.—What (let me aſk) againſt a neutral people? any nation that your kings, or governors, out of luſt of empire, ſhall chooſe

to invade?—No. *When thou goeſt out to battle againſt thine enemies.* This is very material and to be obſerved. For who may we ſuppoſe to have been in the eye of God theſe enemies? Undoubtedly thoſe, who had either invaded the portion of the Lord themſelves, or had joined with others in unmerited hoſtilities. The lawgiver then inſtructs the people, how they were to act upon ſuch an occaſion, as may be ſeen at large. He then proceeds to their attack of any city, which might be hoſtile. And though the people of that city were ever ſo much the aggreſſors; and had unprovoked invaded the provinces of Iſrael, and been guilty of thoſe cruelties, with which inroads in thoſe days were accompanied: yet peace was to be offered, and conditions held out, before they proceeded to retaliation. And theſe conditions were very mild for thoſe times; and ſavoured of great clemency. For the enemy was to ſubmit, and be tributary. But if they ſtood out, and would not afford the compenſation demanded; every male was to be put to the ſword. The reſidue were to be captives:

and

and the victors *were to feed upon the ſpoil of their enemies.* By this no neutral nor innocent people is ſignified, nor is religion at all concerned: nor is any unjuſt and wanton inroad intimated, which was to be carried on out of pride of heart, and luſt of power, but a proper compromiſe and retaliation for undeſerved loſs, and injuries. How could theſe writers conceive, that the Iſraelites were to hew and ſlay, wherever they pleaſed; and that God would give a ſanction to their cruelty? Yet ſo they have boldly declared. In thoſe days the law of retaliation prevailed: and an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, was but a moderate compenſation from thoſe, who had been cruel and unprovoked aggreſſors. But the Iſraelites were not ſuffered to avail themſelves of this right. Whatever the nature of the injury might be; they were ordered to hold out peace upon very mild conditions, before they began an attack. As to their invading firſt, and commencing hoſtilities on account of religion, and to make ſettlements beyond the land appropriated to them, there is not the leaſt encouragement in the law

of Moſes; nor any inſtance of it from their departure from Egypt to the reign of king * David, nor ever afterwards. They were not to make war excepting only when they were authorized by God: even then it was on account of ſome grievance. Extent of empire was contrary to the genius of the people, and the purpoſe of the Deity, who placed them with a particular view in Canaan. God could never give a law, which counteracted his own deſigns.

Thus, what Sir John Marſham, and Mr. Sale, have deſcribed as a cruel ordinance, tending to univerſal conqueſt, and unlimited ſlaughter, turns out a rational proceſs, and full of equity and moderation: ſuch as few nations in thoſe early † times would have obſerved.

* He conquered as far as the Euphrates: but theſe nations had all been the aggreſſors.

† Nor in after times, as we may learn from a variety of paſſages in Thucydides, Polybius, Livy, and other hiſtorians. Above all, Homer affords a true picture of the cruelties, which prevailed in his time, and before.

Concerning

Concerning the Iſraelites borrowing of the Egyptians.

It is ſaid Exodus iii. 21. that the Iſraelites at their departure from Egypt borrowed largely of the Egyptians, with whom they had ſojourned; and that they made no return of the things, which had been thus lent. And it is farther ſaid, that the whole was by divine appointment; which is thought to be inconſiſtent with the juſtice of God, as he is a Deity of all equity and truth. However the following command was given:—*I will give this people favour in the ſight of the Egyptians, and it ſhall come to paſs, that when ye go, ye ſhall not go empty: but every woman ſhall borrow of her neighbour, and of her, that ſojourneth in her houſe, jewels of ſilver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and ye ſhall put them upon your ſons, and upon your daughters: and ye ſhall ſpoil the Egyptians.* This was the order given to Moſes: in conſequence of which it is ſaid, that *the children of Iſrael did according to his word: and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of ſilver, and jewels of gold, and*

raiment. And the Lord gave the people favour in the ſight of the Egyptians: ſo that they lent unto them: and they ſpoiled the Egyptians. Ch. xii. 35, &c. As no return is any where ſpecified, many undue inferences have in conſequence of it been made, as if the whole tranſaction was inconſiſtent with the juſtice of God, and the honour of his people: the hiſtory is therefore pronounced to be untrue. To conſider the merits of the caſe we muſt take in the whole hiſtory of the Iſraelites in Egypt.

After that Joſeph had been brought into the country, he miraculouſly was made the preſervation of the whole nation. His ſervices were ſo eminent, that the king gave him the ſovereignty and management of the whole kingdom: *only in the throne will I be greater than thou.* Gen. xli. 40. Theſe were the words of the prince to him, when he aſſigned to him this ample juriſdiction. In conſequence of this, Joſeph by the conſent of Pharaoh brought his father and his brethren into the land of Egypt; and they were gratefully received

by

by the prince and people. They had a diſtrict given them for a poſſeſſion by the appointment of the ſame king: *and Joſeph placed his father, and his brethren, and gave them a poſſeſſion in the land of Egypt, in the beſt of the land, in the land of Rameſes, as Pharaoh had commanded.* Gen. xlvii. 11. Thus they lived in peace and ſecurity; till a king aroſe who was jealous of the Iſraelites, and dreaded their increaſing power. He accordingly forgot all the benefits, which had from them accrued to Egypt, and reduced them to a ſtate of cruel ſlavery. *The Egyptians made the children of Iſrael to ſerve with rigour: and they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar and brick, and in all manner of ſervice in the field. All the ſervice, with which they made them ſerve was with rigour.* Exod. i. 13, 14. *And the people were ſcattered abroad throughout all the land of Egypt. And the children of Iſrael ſighed by reaſon of their bondage: and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reaſon of their bondage.* Chap. ii. 23. Their enemies proceeded even to a wantonneſs in their cruelty, and inſiſted upon their mak-

ing bricks with ſtubble inſtead of ſtraw, in order to render their lives more bitter. And as the Iſraelites ſtill increaſed and multiplied; an inhuman edict was given, that every male child, which was born, ſhould be caſt into the river and drowned: or otherwiſe deſtroyed. This cruel order was carried into execution: and it was merely by the interpoſition of Providence, that Moſes, who was born in thoſe times, eſcaped. He proved the great lawgiver of the Iſraelites, and under him they petitioned Pharaoh, that they might go three days journey into the wilderneſs, and there ſacrifice to the God of their fathers. This was refuſed: till after a ſeries of miracles, and fearful judgments, they were permitted, and even ordered, by Pharaoh, to depart. The Egyptians had ſuffered ſo much, that they *were urgent upon the people that they might ſend them out of the* * *land in haſte*. Exod. xii. 33. At this time by God's permiſſion they

* It ſeems manifeſt to me, by the expreſſion uſed—of *ſending them out of the land*, that they never expected, nor wiſhed for, the return of the Iſraelites. It is not merely ſaid, that they *let them go*, or *ſent them away:* but ſent them *out of the land*.

borrowed

borrowed of the Egyptians the *jewels of ſilver, and gold; and alſo raiment. And the Lord gave the people favour in the ſight of the Egyptians, ſo that they lent them: and they ſpoiled the Egyptians.* Ver. 36. In this manner they were by the king's order ſent away, together with their flocks, and herds, and with their women, and children: for upon this * Moſes had previouſly inſiſted. The words of Pharaoh were, † *Riſe up, and get you forth from among my people, both you and the children of Iſrael.* The whole of Iſrael was collectively ſent away: *They were thruſt out of Egypt.* From hence, I think, it appears manifeſt, that they were not expected to come back. If ſo, what is ſtiled a ‡ loan, muſt have been a gift; and no return deſired. But, not to inſiſt upon this, let us conſider the proceſs of the hiſtory. The children of Iſrael, in full confidence of the king's aſſurances, ſet out upon their march: and about the third day arrive upon

* Exod. x. 10. xii. 37.

† Exod. xii. 31.—So Exod. xi. 1. *He ſhall ſurely thruſt you out hence all together.*

‡ According to the Greek verſion, the Iſraelites aſked for theſe things, and they were given.

the border of the Red Sea. Pharaoh, contrary to his faith given, collects—* *ſix hundred choſen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains over every one of them—and he purſued after the children of Iſrael:* ——*and found them encamping by the ſea.* The alarm was great: for their ſituation was ſuch as prevented all opportunity of eſcaping. Death was inevitable to the greater part: and to thoſe, who might ſurvive, a renewal of Egyptian bondage. In theſe difficulties it pleaſed God to order the Iſraelites about midnight to paſs forward through the ſea: which parted, and gave them a free paſſage to the other ſide, whither they arrived in ſafety. Their enemies blindly purſued after them: when the waters returned to their original bed; and the Egyptians were overwhelmed in the abyſs. The people the next morning ſaw the Egyptians dead upon the ſea ſhore.

Such was the ſituation of the Iſraelites, who had borrowed ſilver, gold, and raiment; which it is ſaid, that they ought to

* Exod. xiv. 7, 8.

have

have returned. But to whom? to the Egyptians, who had purſued them? They were all dead, which rendered it impoſſible. Beſides, if any thing were really due, Pharaoh and his people by breach of faith had cancelled the obligation. But let us ſuppoſe, that the Iſraelites, after having performed their purpoſed ſacrifices, had returned to Egypt with a deſign to give back, what is ſaid to have been lent. They muſt have been idiots, if, after all they had ſuffered, they did not come to a compromiſe. The addreſs at the firſt interview, according to ſtrict juſtice, muſt have been to this purpoſe: *We are come back in order to make proper reſtitution of the things you lent us. But before we return, what we borrowed from you, be pleaſed to reſtore, what you previouſly, and illegally, took from us. Pay us for the ſervices, unjuſtly demanded of us, and of our fathers, for above an hundred years. Pay us for the vaſſalage, to which we were unduly ſubjected, and the bondage, under which we groaned, when you took us from our legal poſſeſſions, guaranteed to us by your anceſtors, and ſcattered us over the face of the country; when*

when you exacted a ſevere taſk, and gave us not the requiſites to perform it. Make returns for the loſs of our liberty; for the ſtripes and indignities, which, though a free people, you obliged us to endure. Laſtly, make a proper retribution for the murder of our innocents, whom you either ſtrangled at the birth, or elſe threw into the river. When your accounts have been properly ſtated, ſee on which ſide the balance lies. To theſe arguments no anſwer could be given. When therefore ſuch an eſtimate is made, it will be found to turn out greatly in favour of the Iſraelites. How then can a perſon be blamed for not returning a mina, who has a demand of a talent? or not paying ten pounds, where he is owed a thouſand? The prior and greater obligation is firſt to be conſidered. But all the gold, and ſilver, and all the precious things, of Egypt could not atone for the injuſtice done to the Iſraelites. Beſides, as I have before ſaid, if there had been any thing due, Pharaoh and his people by their breach of faith cancelled all obligation. Their injurious attack drove the Iſraelites away, and precluded all re-

turn.

turn. And after all we may be certain, that no return was expected.

Of the Negroes.

Another objection to the veracity of the ſcriptures has been founded upon a notion, that the Negroes are a ſeparate race of men; and therefore could not poſſibly be derived from Adam, or Noah, as we are taught by Moſes. In anſwer to this I recur to my former poſition, that we ſhould not yield to any idle doubts, after our faith is well founded. In conſequence of this I aſk, if the authenticity of the ſcriptures, and the truth of the Chriſtian religion, have not been ſufficiently proved? If ſo, we ſhould not ſuffer any foreign and precarious article to diſturb our peace of mind. Let the Negroes ſhift for themſelves. And after all the whole is merely a ſurmiſe; for there is not the leaſt authority for the notion. It may therefore appear unneceſſary to refute it. But as a confutation may ſerve to ſhew the weakneſs of theſe arguments, and how wrong we are, after our faith is determined, to admit ſuch undue influence,

I will

I will endeavour to ſhew the futility of this aſſertion.

It has pleaſed God to give to all families, or nations, ſome particular marks, by which they are diſtinguiſhed from their neighbours. But they differ ſtill farther from thoſe at a great diſtance in conſequence of the heat or cold which they experience; and the climate under which they live. If we take people from the extremes, at a very great interval of latitude, and compare them together, they may poſſibly ſeem to perſons unexperienced quite different beings. But if we approach from the one to the other by degrees, and obſerve the different nations, who furniſh the interval, there will appear a juſt gradation, and the variation will be found no more, than might be expected from manner of life, and ſituation. A Dane, Saxon, and Engliſhman, of the north, will be found in general very ſimilar in feature and complexion. If we deſcend to the ſouth of France, we ſhall meet with people leſs fair: and if we paſs to Portugal, the natives will appear upon compariſon much darker, and of different features.

Croſs

Croſs over to Morocco and Taffilat, they become more and more ſwart. If we proceed beyond the deſert of Zara to the tropic, we meet with people quite black, but with ſtraight and floating hair. Farther within the tropics, and on each ſide of the line are perfect Negroes; people for the moſt part of ſimilar clumſy and bloated features, and of the darkeſt hue of any; alſo with woolly and frizled hair. The whole of theſe variations depends upon ſituation, and climate. The Baron de Pauw ſays therefore very truly—* Que le genre humain ait eu une tige, ou qu'il en ait eu pluſieurs, queſtion inutile que des phyſiciens ne devroient jamais agiter en Europe. Il eſt certain que le climat ſeul produit toutes les varietés, qu'on obſerve parmi les hommes.—† Le teint plus ou moins obſcur, plus ou moins foncé, des habitants, qui eſſuient ces différentes températures de l'air entre les tropiques, prouve donc, indépendamment de toute autre démonſtration, que le climat ſeul colorie les ſubſtances les plus intimes du corps

* Recherches—ſur les Americanes, tom. i. p. 216.
† P. 219.

humain.

humain. For his opinion he gives very good reaſons from the ſituation and heat experienced by the different nations in thoſe parts.

The Egyptians acknowledged themſelves to be of the race of Mizraim; and from that perſon their country was * denominated. They therefore had no connexion with the people on the weſtern coaſt of Africa, nor bore any relation to them. Now we are told that the natives of the loweſt part of Egpyt were dark; and thoſe higher up, and nearer the ſun, darker: but thoſe of the upper region approached to black, and woolly hair. Hence this characteriſtic was not confined to any one race of men. This is farther proved by many of the Iſlanders viſited by our late voyagers, and particularly from the obſervations of Captain Cook, and Dr. Forſter. They ſpeak of a great difference in reſpect to complexion, ſtature, and hair, among people of the ſame place: which they ſay depended upon their being more or leſs expoſed, and the

* We are told by Leo Africanus, that the Arabians at this day call it Mezre.

particular diet, which they uſed. This was obſervable at Otaheite. The latter writer ſays of the New Caledonians, * *They are all of a ſwarthy colour, their hair is criſped but not very woolly—their faces round, with thick lips and wide mouths.——The inhabitants of Tanna are almoſt of the ſame ſwarthy colour, as the former; only a few had a clearer complexion, and in theſe the tips of their hair were of a yellowiſh brown. The hair and beards of the reſt were all black and criſp, and in ſome woolly.——The natives of Mellicollo border the neareſt upon the tribe of monkeys* †. —*The hair is in the greater part of them woolly and frizled: their complexion is ſooty: their features harſh: the cheek bone and face broad.* Captain Carteret deſcribes the natives of Egmont iſland, *as* ‡ *black and woolly headed.* He deſcribes another iſland, where *the people were black and woolly headed, like the negroes of* § *Africa.* Many more inſtances might be produced: but theſe will

* Forſter, vol. iii. p. 239, and note. † P. 242.
‡ Carteret's Voyage, p. 580.
§ Ibid. p. 587.—He mentions the like of other people, p. 599, and 604.

ſuffice

ſuffice to ſhew, that this difference of hair and complexion, and the other anomalies, with which we find it accompanied, are not confined to any particular race of men. For they are to be found among people, that never had any connexion with the coaſt of Guinea, or Negroland: on the contrary, they are as far removed from it, as any people upon earth can * be: whole continents come between.

The variation therefore in reſpect to complexion, form, and feature, depends in great meaſure upon the heat and cold experienced, and the way of life, to which people accuſtom themſelves. And there are other occult cauſes, with which we are unacquainted, and by which a variation in the ſpecies of all animals is produced. Hence it happens, that people, however diſtinct, become in time like the natives, among whom they ſettle, however ſeparate they may keep themſelves. This is manifeſt

* Their language and cuſtoms ſhew, that they were originally from the Philippines, and other iſlands in their neighbourhood. See a very curious note to the firſt vol. of Capt. Cook's Voyage in the Reſolution, p. 373.

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from a colony of Jews at Cochin upon the coaſt of Malabar; who came there according to * Hamilton as early as the captivity under Nebuchadnezzar. Thus much is certain, the era is ſo far back, that they know not now the time of their arrival. The Jews originally were a fair people; but theſe of whom we are ſpeaking, are become in all reſpects like the Indians, among whom they reſide. They conſiſted formerly of 80,000 families: but are now reduced to 4000. Mr. Bate, a clergyman, who had a ſon in the Eaſt Indies, made application to have ſome particulars of their hiſtory. † *I wrote over to the coaſt of Malabar, to know what tradition the Jews have retained, as to the time of their ſettlement at Cochin, but had no ſatisfactory anſwer. Ezekiel, the Rabbin of the ſynagogue, did indeed ſend me a tranſcript of their copper plate, hung up in their ſynagogue. 'Tis written in*

* Account of the Eaſt Indies, c. xxvi. p. 323.

† Bate's Rationale, p. 223. Notes. Maffeius in his Indian hiſtory ſpeaks of the Jews, as being in great numbers at Cochin. He ſtiles them Egyptian Jews: I ſuppoſe, from their colour. See his Hiſt. l. xvi. p. 332. D.

the Malabar language, put into common Hebrew characters; interlined with a literal verſion in Hebrew; with an Hebrew paraphraſe upon that literal verſion. But I can find no date of their ſettlement there: only a grant from a Malabar prince called Schirin Perimal, i. e. *Prince Schirin, to allow them to ſettle there, with certain privileges.* Of theſe Jews he farther ſays, that *they are now grown as black, as the other Malabarians, who are hardly a ſhade lighter than thoſe of Guinea, Benin, or Angola:* And he very truly inſiſts, that *this is a diſcovery which clearly proves, that the different complexions of the different ſons of Noah may be occaſioned by difference of climate, air, food, water, or other natural cauſes.* It is ſaid, in conformity to the account above, that the Portugueſe, who have been ſettled upon the coaſt of Angola for three centuries, and ſomewhat more, are become abſolute Negroes. Of this we are aſſured by the Abbe de * Manet, who was in that part of the world in the year 1764; and baptiſed ſeve-

* Nouvelle Hiſtoire de l'Afrique Francoiſe.—Paris 1767.

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ral of their children. He is quoted by Mr. de Pauw, who gives us this farther information. * Quant aux deſcendants des premiers Portugais, qui vinrent fixer leur demeure dans cette partie du monde vers l'an 1450, ils ſont devenus des nègres tres-achevés pour le coloris, la laine de la tête, de la barbe, et les traits de la phyſionomie, quoiqu'ils ayent d'ailleurs retenu les points plus eſſentiel d'une Chriſtianiſme dégénéré, et conſervé la langue du Portugal, corrumpue, à la vérité, par différentes dialectes Africains.

The like is mentioned by Moore in his account of the River Gambia. He takes notice of ſome of the ſame nation, who had reſided for above three centuries near the Mundingoes, and differ ſo little from them, as to be called Negroes. This however they reſent, though they are not eaſily to be diſtinguiſhed.

From hence we may be ſatisfied, that the Negroes are by no means a different ſpecies of men: and in conſequence of this we

* Recherches ſur les Americanes, tom. i. p. 211.

ſhould learn how wrong it is to ſuffer the idle ſurmiſes of diſaffected perſons to interfere with our faith; and trouble our minds with a renewal of doubts and ſcruples. Of theſe there will be no end, if we yield to every idle notion that is broached, and let fancy prevail over reaſon.

The fatal Conſequences of this Weakneſs.

It may ſeem extraordinary, that any perſon ſhould ſuffer himſelf to be miſled by ſuch an imaginary guide. But fancy is a formidable phantom. We ſay indeed of truth, that it is a ſtubborn antagoniſt; and that matter of fact cannot be borne down by opinion. But we experience the contrary every day. The moſt poſitive evidence, and repeated proofs, give way to ſcruple, and diſguſt, and preconceived notions; the wayward offspring of vanity, and ignorance. How many articles are plainly declared in the ſcriptures, to which people will not, cannot accede, becauſe they do not ſuit with their limited mode of thinking? They therefore blindly yield to

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their prejudices, and remain inflexible in their unbelief. In this manner, as I have before ſaid, they abandon reaſon for fancy; and make their deductions accordingly. But when they thus give up the moſt faithful inmate of their breaſt for this ideal favourite, the illuſion is fatal; and the iſſue ſpurious and unnatural. We ſee in ſuch perſons the fable of Ixion verified. Inſtead of a goddeſs he embraced a cloud: and what was the conſequence?—A monſter.

CONCLUSION.

IN this manner it has been my earneſt endeavour to ſhew the authenticity, and excellence, of the holy ſcriptures; and the truth of the Chriſtian religion. But as there is ſuch debility in the mind of man, and a pride of heart, which produces theſe doubts and difficulties, theſe *ſtumbling-blocks*, and *rocks of offence*; let us ſeek a remedy in that excellent prayer of our church, in which we invoke the Deity: *That it may pleaſe Him to give to all his people increaſe of grace; to hear meekly his word, to receive it with pure affection, and to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit.* Whoever will in this wiſe read, learn, and inwardly digeſt, the holy ſcriptures, cannot fail of being a Chriſtian.

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